

Audience 42 C



The Perfect Vision, High Performance Home Theater, May/June 2001
Dynaudio Audience Series Home-Theater Loudspeaker System

As one of the world's foremost manufacturers of both raw speaker components and complete speaker systems, Denmark's Dynaudio has a well-deserved reputation for delivering both quality and value to its customers. And with the release of its newly updated Audience Series, which includes tower, bookshelf, powered subwoofer, and even wall-mount designs, Dynaudio unfurls both attributes with aplomb.

The Dynaudio sound is known to be natural and relaxed, with a warm tonal balance; the newly designed Audience Series reviewed here doesn't veer from this course. What's remarkable is the degree to which the Audience lineup maintains this performance for such a moderate price \$4,000.

Features and Stuff

In order to insure a uniform voicing from speaker to speaker—something crucial for home-theater use Dynaudio uses the same (or only slight variations of the same) driver complement throughout the Audience Series. Great attention has also been given to crossover frequencies, slopes, and parts quality, as well as to each speaker's nominal impedance and sensitivity. All Audience Series bass drivers incorporate lightweight 3" aluminum voice coils for improved sensitivity, power handling, and linearity, while the single-piece cones, molded of MSP (magnesium silicate polymer), are said to reduce intermodulation and group delay distortions. In addition, bass and sensitivity are both enhanced by front or rear-firing ports that use rounded openings for a smoother, and hence less colored, airflow; and optional foam port plugs are provided to reduce output—depending on placement and personal preference. All Audience models (subwoofers aside) employ identical 1.1" soft dome tweeters with pure aluminum wire voice coils, magnetic fluid damping (for higher power handling), and damped internal chambers. Speaker enclosures are extensively cross-braced and damped (for reduced coloration) with rounded front edges to minimize diffraction off the front baffle. Connections are via all-metal gold-plated five-way binding posts—no bi-wiring option is included.

These speakers are nicely built and come in three standard finishes: "black ash," "rosewood," or "light cherry" vinyl (wall-mount models also come in white). The review samples arrived in the black ash finish and though not bad looking (the profile of the floorstanding models is quite handsome), they were plain-and unobtrusive. (One very cool touch: All floor-standing models are fitted with an additional set of rear-mounted grille fasteners, so listeners who prefer the sound with the grilles off will have a handy place to store them.)

Lavishing this much care in the design process makes it easy for dealers and consumers, as well as critics, to mix and match models within the Audience Series. So when it came time to assemble the review system two goals were established. First, the speakers were to be optimized for small-to-medium sized rooms. Second, we were looking for a package that would total roughly \$4,000—a popular price point. The six-piece array that met both criteria consisted of a pair of the sleek front ported Audience 122 towers (a two way design employing a single soft dome tweeter, flanked by two 4.75" polypropylene woofers), the Audience 42C center, and a pair of the bookshelf-sized Audience 42s for surround. (The 42 and 42C are two way designs employing one soft-dome tweeter and one 5.25-inch driver. The 42C is front-ported, while the 42s are rear-ported.)

In contrast, the Audience Sub-30A powered subwoofer is something of a country boy-on the brutish side. Although it isn't especially large by American subwoofer standards, it was a bit of a surprise lined up beside the other models. But then big bass generally does require large woofers, cabinets, and amplifiers. Here, however, the amplifier rating is ambiguous; Dynaudio's spec simply states that the maximum power output is 90 watts RMS. No matter. The Sub30A never broke a sweat or otherwise came close to running out of steam. The recipient of this power is a 12", one-piece MSP cone complete with Dynaudio's die cast basket and 4" aluminum wire voice coil. The Sub-30A enclosure uses an extra-thick 1.25" Medium Density Fiberboard (MDF) composite baffle and, as with other Audience cabinets, is rigidly cross-braced and Bitumen damped. Around back are two ports and variable level and crossover (60-120Hz) adjustments, plus two unusual features. One is the phase control, which is variable from 0°-360°—as opposed to the standard 0/180 switch. The other is dubbed "Utility" in/out and is for use with a pair of Sub-30As in discrete multichannel systems (such as DTS, Dolby Digital, and MPEG-2), where all five channels can be driven full range. In this case, the two subwoofers are driven by a single mono signal.

Two-Channel Performance

I always like to listen to Multichannel systems a step at a time before plunging into the complete system. Here, I began with stereo sources over the Audience 122s, then added the Sub-30A, and finally the 42 surrounds and 42C center. I also used the 42s as front left and right speakers in order to get a sense of what a quartet of them might be like for those with tight space or budget constraints. Driving the stereo rig were Balanced Audio Technology's VK-3i preamp, VK-200 amplifier, and VK-D5 CD player, while the multichannel electronics were Proceed's AVP processor and AMP 5 separates, and later a B&K AVR 307 receiver (review, Issue 34). Sony and Kenwood provided the DVD players, and

