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The Canadian speaker manufacturer Paradigm pursues technology trickle-down not just as a design philosophy, but almost as a religion whose “articles of the faith” require that each new series of loudspeakers will be more sophisticated and better sounding than the last—and often without any increase in price. It’s a cool system that, I think, perhaps helps Paradigm win customers for life. For a great example of what I’m talking about, you might want to consider the firm’s new Monitor Series 7 lineup, which in many way adopts technologies and design approaches previously seen only the firm’s more costly Reference Studio-series speakers.

Playback and *The Perfect Vision* are jointly in the process of working up a review involving several new Monitor Series 7 models, including a complete Monitor surround system based on the flagship Monitor 11 floorstanders (estimated FMV, \$799 each), but for starters we thought we would take a look at a stereo pair of Monitor 11’s, since that flagship model incorporates essentially all of the technology changes that other Series 7 models will receive.

What makes the Monitor Series 7 lineup special? I suppose one answer would be to say that, just a few years back, today’s new Monitor Series 7 models could easily have passed for earlier-generation Studio models. But let’s get down to specifics; changes found in the new Monitor Series 7 speakers include:

- New slim-line cabinet designs said to reduce model footprints by about 20%.
- An all new plinth design that accompanies the slim-line cabinets, providing plenty of stability while—at least in the case of the Monitor 11—creating the visual illusion that the main speaker cabinet is “floating” about ½” above the plinth.
- A complete baffle redesign where finite element analysis (FEA) was used to “remove resonances and vibrations” while also significantly improving cabinet rigidity/solidity.
- A grille frame redesign (something I personally welcome, since I was never completely happy with Paradigm’s old grille frames), where grilles use self-aligning magnetic fasteners (Hallelujah, no more mounting posts to break off or unsightly mounting holes in the front baffle), plus—and this is the really slick part—a new “honeycomb interior corner architectures” said to “prevent sound capture in grille corners” and to ensure “acoustic integrity remains intact whether speakers are played with grilles on or grilles off.”
- The new Monitor 11 is now the size of the Monitor 9 Series 6, but nevertheless steps up to become a three-way, 5-driver design (where the old Monitor 9 was a 4-driver design).
- Driver technology now appears to be drawn directly from the playbook of Paradigm’s more costly Studio models. Hence, the new Monitors get:
 - S-PAL (satin anodized pure aluminum) dome tweeters, which are now fitted with waveguides and a protective metal mesh guard.
 - S-PAL midrange cones (as compared to polymer cones in the old Monitors) fitted with Studio-derived lightweight foam rubber surrounds, high-temperature voice coils, and—in the Monitor 11—super neodymium magnets.
 - Carbon-infused co-polymer polypropylene bass cones with the same motor tweaks as found in the midrange drivers.
- Greater sensitivity and deeper bass extension are promised for all Monitor Series 7 floorstanders.

In keeping with longstanding Paradigm practice, the changes seen in the new Monitor Series 7 range are more evolutionary than revolutionary, but when you make a bunch of small, positive changes in unison, the net effect can be surprisingly dramatic, as I discovered after unboxing our review set of Monitor 11 towers.



First Impressions: Paradigm Monitor 11 v.7 Towers

Right out of the box, I was struck by both the smoothness and nuance of the Monitor 11's. In the olden days, metal drivers were often regarded as mixed blessing, offering great transient speed and rigidity, but also carrying excess sonic baggage in the form of unwanted resonance (or even, horrors, outright ringing). At Paradigm, those days are long gone, so that you now enjoy the benefits of metal driver technology with essentially none of the potential penalties. Perhaps as a result, the 11's sound quite refined and sophisticated (if I heard them in the dark and was told they were Paradigm Studio models, I might well have believed that assertion).

To give you some idea of just how nuanced the Monitor 11's are, let me say that they are revealing enough to make child's play of side-by-side comparisons between different DACs, making even very subtle differences between competing DACs easy to hear (which is more than can be said for many mid-priced speakers).

Next, I found the speakers remarkably easy to drive. I decided to power them with Peachtree Audio's terrific new iNova integrated amp/DAC/dock, and found that, if anything, the iNova seemed to have more clout than the Monitors really required. In truth, Peachtree's lower-output iDecco amp would probably have been more than enough to make the Monitor 11s "sing." The high apparent sensitivity of the Monitor range bodes well for those who may want to drive it with a comparatively low-powered (though for obvious reasons, high-quality) AVR in a home theater setting.

Finally, I could not help but note that the Monitor 11's offer a really nice combination of bass extension, power and control. The only potential "hitch" I can see is that the 11's, which feature dual rear-firing ducted ports, may actually have more bass oomph than is necessary (or even desirable) for some rooms. The good news, here, is that I think you could build a perfectly satisfying Monitor 11-based surround rig without needing a subwoofer. Nevertheless, I do think Paradigm might to well to borrow a trick from the Monitor Audio game and thus to supply the Monitor 11's with foam port-damping plugs (Monitor calls them by the British term, "bungs") to help trim bass output in smaller room settings.

As I get more experience with the speakers, and then try them in a full-on surround system, I'll report my findings in a full-length review soon to appear on this site. But until then, just know that the new Monitor Series 7 models are the best yet from Paradigm, and carry forward their tradition of sonic sophistication and value for money.

Happy listening.

