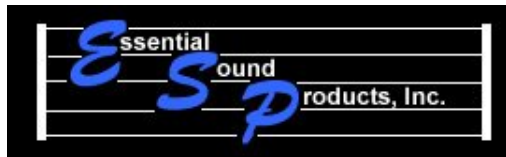


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Tuesday, February 10, 2009

New Legacy Studio HD: Yes, It's Better



About ten years ago, I reviewed the original Legacy Studio compact monitor and found it quite a bargain, for such accuracy and evocative pleasantness when combined with a good tube or solid state system. There was a slight midbass bump and the titanium dome could be a little peaky with some music, but it was and still is a great speaker.

Flash forward to 2008 and Legacy Founder/Designer Bill Dudleston introduces the Studio HD, version number two. Priced at \$1,699, this made-in-USA speaker is still quite a bargain, and they have been smoothed a bit in their response without losing any of the imaging and essential accuracy

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found in the first iteration. Translation: these are even more amazing small speakers!

“*The new Studio, priced at \$1,699 per pair, has been totally redesigned — with new drivers and cabinet design — for maximum accuracy in a small enclosure.*”

The new Legacy Studio's primary market is the audiophile who wants a full range (within its size limit of course), good sounding speakers that can be tucked into tight spaces. They also can be used in a surround system where space is limited.

The details

The Studio HD is a compact-sized, closefield speaker that sports an 8-inch cast frame bass driver with a three-layer diaphragm and a custom-designed 1-inch neodymium-folded ribbon tweeter. The ported, B4-reflex cabinet, provides bass augmentation for the small 13-inches tall 10.5-inches wide and 10.8-inches deep cabinet, allowing the speakers to be reached down to a claimed 42 Hz.

Overall specifications included a factory rated frequency response of 42 Hz- 22k Hz (plus, minus 2 dB). The crossover frequency is 2.8 kHz. Power rating range is listed at 25 watts to 300 watts continuous RMS. Impedance is rated a 4 ohms nominal.

The cabinet's internal bracing and ultra-dense hardwood housing (28 pounds overall) make for an extremely inert package with no midrange or treble coloration. Finishes include rosewood, cherry and high gloss black pebble. The angled edges and sloped front to back dimensions are said to enhance dispersion.

Cable connection is via spade or banana plugs, and the speakers can be bi-amped or bi-wired by removing the jumpers from the four speaker posts. Two switches allow subtle reduction in the midbass and low treble to compensate for room and location effects on the sound — about -2 dB.

Setup

I installed the Legacys in my reference listening on Apollo speaker stands and angled them in slight toward the listening position, which was about eight feet away. They were powered with a three different amps, including a Bryston 14B SST 600-wpc bipolar output amplifier, Pass Labs X350.5 Class-A/AB 350-wpc MOSFET output amplifier and my current favorite, the all Class-A MOSFET 30-wpc Pass XA30.5.

The amps were linked to two preamps: the ultra-accurate, solid state Coda/Legacy High Current Preamp and the 6SN7-tube based Rogue Audio Model 99 Magnum. Sources included an Esoteric DV-

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About The Publisher

John Gatski has been evaluating consumer, audiophile, home cinema and professional audio components since 1993. In 1995, he created *Pro Audio Review*, and he has written for *Audio*, *Laserviews*, *Enjoy The Music*, *The Audiophile Voice* and *High Performance Review*.

50 universal players with internal upsampling converters, and an Apple MacBook Pro computer linked to a Benchmark DAC1 Pre or Lavry DA10 converter.

Component connections consisted of Alpha Core solid-silver, two-conductor speaker cables for the amp/speaker connection and Alpha Core's solid-silver, two-conductor balanced and unbalanced cables for the source/preamp link. For AC delivery, I used Essential Sound power cords and power strip plugged into an Alpha-Core balanced power unit. For a reference, I compared the new Legacy Studios to the original Studios, a set of well-regarded Lipinski L505s closefield pro speakers, and my reference Legacy Focus 20/20 mid/farfield tower speakers.

The audition

On first listen, I could tell that the Legacy's did not need much break in. On a sampling of my own 24-bit/96 kHz high resolution acoustic guitar recordings (see sidebar), the new Studios sounded very natural with a quite-accurate presentation of my 1973 D35 Martin and custom-shop Martin OO-28 fingerstyle guitars. Imaging was deep and wide with the complexity of the strums and plucks quite revealing — without any harsh overtones or understated midrange. Nicely done. The Studios are excellent imaging speakers. Even compared to my Legacy Focus 20/20s towers with multiple drivers, the Studios were quite impressive in the amount of information they conveyed from front to back and side to side.

On prerecorded titles, such as the out-of-print DMP SACD **Steve Davis** *Quality of Your Silence*, the ribbon tweeter had less of that seductive transient presence on piano than the titanium done of the original Studio, but it delivered the tone more accurately.

Transient response is quite good for such a reasonably priced speaker. The reproduction of the drum cymbals on the Davis SACD reflected the speed and air of a well-recorded drum recording setup, without a hint of harshness or over splashiness.

The AIX Records DVD-A Lawrence Juber Guitar Noir is a highly recommended reference listening disc and the recording sounds superb through the new Studios. Case in point is the title track. It is about as live sounding as a recording can get — with incredible percussion transients following the precise acoustic guitar fingerpickling tones. The Studios can deliver much of the openness of the cut nearly as well as the much more expensive and larger Legacy Focus. The Focus filled the room with more sound and bass (three woofers, mind you), but the new Studios delivered the essential tones and image.

High-resolution piano recordings also revealed no exaggerated character or harshness in the upper register; the precise transients that the quality piano microphones captured on a number of high resolution recordings were not diminished by the Studios. A piano sounds like a piano in a good sounding room.



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“Another positive of the ribbon tweeter is its lack of extra sibilance you often hear on female vocals from some metal or soft dome drivers. I played a number of female vocal recordings, and this speaker really flattered them with no exaggerated sibilance. The original Studio, indeed, had a wee bit of that audible sibilance, but not these new babies.

The other characteristic I noticed was the good, unexaggerated bass for such a small speaker. I measured test tones to 52 Hz that were just a few dB off the 1 kHz reference tone in my room. The original Studios had good bass, but there was some mid-to-upper bass enhancement in its tuning to help out the small driver/cabinet configuration. The latest version's woofer allows a flatter bass response from this new cabinet.

The treble and bass “tilt” switches offer a little bit of fine tuning for spaces that may be a bit more live or have mid-bass build up when placed close to wall. I found they sounded a bit more open in the flat position.

The new Legacy Studio HD can be played loud without hurting your ears. The EQ'd-bright **Fleetwood Mac** *Rumours* DVD-A (“Go Your Own Way”), **Queen** *The Game* DVD-A (“Another One Bites the Dust”), **REM** *Document* DVD-A (the prophetic “End of the World”) or the gorgeous remastered-to-SACD **Carpenter's Greatest Hits**: the Studios did not get congested when cranked up. Of course, I used them with quality amps.

As for negatives with this monitor, I really did not see or hear any. It sounds a little less plump and present than the original, but its reward is better accuracy.

If there is a knock on Legacy is that they have only about 20 dealers nationwide with most of the business from custom orders. Therefore you have to buy them to audition them. However, their service is first rate, and they will let you audition them for 30 days with a full refund policy and free pickup if you don't like them.

The verdict

Like its original namesake, the New Studio HD is highly recommended for audiophiles who want good, accurate sounding speakers for small systems and small spaces. This version is more accurate. At \$1,699 the Studios are a steal. The build-quality, component selection and the sound that emanates from them shows that USA hi-fi is alive and well.



Brand New! Lexicon BD-30 Universal Player

Lexicon has released the BD-30 Blu-ray/universal player (\$3,499) that supports every current AV format today, including Blu-ray, BD-Live, BonusView, DVD, upconverted DVD, DVD-Audio, SACD, and CD. The *Everything Audio Network* is scheduled to get a review sample by the end of the year.

Harking back to popular Lexicon's RT-20 universal player of a few years ago, the BD-30 includes Anchor Bay's award-winning Video Reference Series technology, for pristine 1080P video from BD and upconverted DVD, as well as state-of-the-art audio converters for the high-end playback of movie and music sound tracks from BD, SACD, and DVD-A.

The Player also supports Profile 2.0 BD functions, including both BonusView, Blu-ray's picture-in-picture feature and BD-Live. BD Live is an advanced Blu-ray feature that enables users to access content via an Internet-connected Blu-ray player and download a variety of up-to-date content — such as refreshed previews and exclusive special features. Internet connection is via USB or Ethernet.

According to Lexicon, the player has a rapid startup time and its full array of decoding options (linear PCM, Dolby Tru-HD, DTS Master HD and even HDCD CDs) and connection options will deliver audiophile quality sound for multichannel and dedicated stereo listeners. However, no AES/EBU digital output connection like the RT-20.

Go to www.lexicon.com.



Brand New! NTI Audio XL2 Handheld Analyzer

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offers a unique combination of state-of-the-art sound level meter, comprehensive, accurate acoustical analyzer and audio analyzer functions.

Priced at \$1,745 with test mic, the XL2 is an ideal audio measurement device for high-end consumer (home theater or audiophile room measurements and audio component spec measurements) or for professional setup or troubleshooting in live sound, recording studios and broadcast facilities). Manufacturers and repair centers can use the XL2 in their line operations. It works with most any tone/signal generators (as well as with test-tone CDs, DVD and Blu-ray discs) on the market, including several models from NTI.

The XL2 features an easy-to-use interface and preset parameters to allow the measurements system to be activated in short order. It is available with an accurate measurement mic and onboard analog/digital I/O for component testing and interface.

It includes rechargeable Li-Po battery, TOSLINK output (optional), up to 2 GB Mini-SD Card storage (saving all your measurements), real-time clock, serial programable I/O interface, and AC or battery operation.

Besides significant measurement capabilities, the XL2 contains a flexible user interface. The measurement screens may be personalized — ranging from basic functions for simplified operator interface, to advanced user menus with deeper menu settings and functions.

Measurement highlights feature sound-level meter displays up to five levels simultaneously, and real-time analyzer in 1/3 octave or 1/1 octave resolution. Specific measurements includes SPL level, room acoustics, real-time analysis, FFT analysis, reverb time, polarity, delay, speech intelligibility and analog audio.

Go to www.nti-audio.com for more information.



Brand New! Onkyo Integrated Amp, SACD/CD Player

Onkyo has added a high-quality, two-channel SACD player and an integrated amplifier to its stereo component line. In keeping with Onkyo's tradition of offering high performance and value, these components employ precision-