



If you don't like white finishes, then you'll have to look elsewhere

As light as the driven snow

These white 'designer' speakers deliver an engaging audio performance – but are they too polite for home cinema? **Adam Rayner** reports



Audio Pro has long shown an obsession with cool, crisp design, often exploring different textures and colours for their products. Yet this set of loudspeakers is as boxy as old-school Volvos, and as function-breeding-form as Ikea furniture. However, this is not priced like cheap flat pack furniture. The price is definitely in the serious engineering bracket at some thirteen hundred pounds.

Audio Pro describes this particular Evo system as a 'midrange' option, but that's only partly true. While the company offers a host of speakers that cost more and less than these, therefore making them mid-priced, in comparison to competitive products, this package is relatively inexpensive.

Let's get one thing out of the way, which is my own taste in speakers and their appearance. This shouldn't have too much bearing on your opinion – you can see the handsome photographs here and decide for yourself whether the design of these Audio Pros appeals. But I must point out that while some of the brand's speakers can be supplied in deep, lustrous black, these come in Satin White, or Satin White. Which is great if you live in a Philadelphia cheese advert and have Swedish furniture called Plöpp and Snerrg, but personally I like woody and I like lustrous and I like dark. I even like see-through. These I think are a bit ugly – however, other members

of the HCC team, particularly Rik Henderson with his Apple obsession, think they're gorgeous. Guess you pays your money...

Okay, that's the looks dealt with, so what do you get for your £1,300?

Vital statistics

The system reviewed here features a Sub Evo DC 8 woofer, four Evo 40 DC tallboy satellites (Evo 10 DC bookshelf speakers are also available), and an Evo 20 DC centre.

The subwoofer uses an 8in driver running on 175W of ICEPower amplification (sounds a bit more muscular for the Watts rated) and the five surrounding enclosures are all equipped with paired 4.5in drivers (now that *is* an odd size) for mids and midbass, with fabric dome tweeters, mounted in short stubby horn-shaped indentations, for highs all the way up to 35kHz. (20kHz is the theoretical limit of hearing, but tweeters that can do this simply sound sweeter and better.) These seem to serve to spray the high-frequencies out in very wide directions, pushed slightly across the soundstage by the horn's shape.

The fronts and rears are rear single-ported with one speaker connection; the Evo 20 DC centre has the same driver complement but is dual-front ported. All the cabinets come with plastic and cloth grilles.

Along with the very high-efficiency mids, which are lovely and

soft suspended (you can shove one gently and evenly and the other wobbles gently inwards also, due to the electro magnetic field you create by moving the coil in the gap – only possible on nice efficiently-coupled drivers) **the sheer speed and extension these fabric sweeties can achieve makes for a detailed and engrossing soundfield.**

The Heat is on

Stung by the editorial leader comments that I so often use cartoons to review kit, I pulled out one of my fave actioners for this one: *Heat* with Robert De Niro and Al Pacino. Reviews of their new flick *Righteous Kill* have been mixed, but just check out 1hr 28mins and 10 seconds of this '90s classic, where the two Hollywood heavyweights pull indulgently amused faces at each other like no one else can. Wonderful. What makes this all work is the well-crafted score and soundtrack.

In the opening minutes, as we follow De Niro's character into a hospital where he plans to steal an ambulance for a 'score' (what a UK villain would simply call a 'job') the whole soundscape builds around us, with bleeping pulse monitors, clinking instruments and urgent snatches of medico-speak as he goes past each cubicle.

Later on the action shifts to a diner interior at 24mins, 43secs. >

AV/CV

Product: Designer plain white tower speaker-based surround system with front-firing sub

Position: Mid-price product with series of Audio Pro speakers both above and below it in price terms

Peers: Sony SAFT7ED; Arcam Muso Logo; KEF KHT-5005.2



The Audio Pros create a wonderfully immersive soundfield, both near and distant; lots of tiny tinkles and clanks of crockery, as well as the hubbub of voices. All layered like Baklava pastry, but not as sickly.

The delicacy and rarity of the Evo's top-end performance is perfectly evinced when Val Kilmer's complex robber character is having a row with his wife. As he shouts, Dominic, their young son, starts to cry in the distant far-left front channel. I wasn't certain where it was coming from initially! Likewise, as Pacino's cop gets home after a tough day at the office, he puts his gun down on the glass table with a particularly crisp 'tonk' that shows the tweeters are doing their job.

Thing is, this movie is a right sod for the tougher moments. The first heist scene really gets your blood pumping and relies on some clever use of sound. You get some close-miked, under-the-breath 'You wanna mess with me?' from one bad guy to the hapless security van driver, but you also get an explosion that visibly blows out a line of used cars' windscreens. Likewise, the iconic street mega-shootout later has some serious gunplay with real depth and weight.

Sadly, the impulse-ability of these sexy designer boxes (or horrid slabular plinths depending upon your point of view) is limited by the low surface area of the drivers, and while the Audio Pro engineers were keen to ensure they were run in before assessments were made, I cannot in all honesty feel that any amount of running in is going to quadruple the air being pushed around in here. Thus moments of action and huge 'badabooms' may not impress those used to larger cabinets.

However, it is worth noting that Audio Pro offers a range of other subs, but you may have to forego the all-white aesthetics.

The ultimate question

If, though, you are *not* a raving hooligan and you like the look (they'll go well with a white iPod-décor-led room) you can rest assured that these speakers feature fine-quality high-speed transducer technology, with seriously top-notch speakery bits in their woodwork that work bloody well.

The thing is, they're just not that nutty loud. These are speakers perfect for a living room, but maybe not a dedicated home cinema environment. Get an audition to see if they're Odeon enough for you ●

Three's company: The Evo 40 DC towers feature a 1in tweeter and twin 4.5in mid-range drivers

→ Specifications

Audio Pro Evo 40 DC fronts and rears

- Drive units:** 1 x 25mm (1in) super tweeter, plus 2 x 114mm (4.5in) low-frequency drivers per enclosure, rear ported
- Frequency response:** 40Hz-35kHz which is very high indeed
- Sensitivity:** 89dB/m @ 1w/1m
- Power handling:** 125W
- Dimensions:** 1150(h) x 124(w) x 155(d)mm
- Weight:** 11kg each

Audio Pro Evo 20 DC centre

- Drive units:** 1 x 25mm (1in) super tweeter, plus 2 x 114mm (4.5in) low-frequency drivers per dual-front ported enclosure
- Frequency response:** 42Hz-35kHz as far into bat-frequencies as the mains
- Sensitivity:** 90dB/m @ 1w/1m
- Power handling:** 100W (less than the towers)
- Dimensions:** 126(h) x 420(w) x 190(d)mm
- Weight:** 6kg

Audio Pro Evo DC 8 Subwoofer

- Drive units:** One 200mm (8in) long throw driver
- Enclosure type:** Bass reflex (ported)
- Frequency response:** 27Hz-100Hz, which is surprisingly low for an 8in
- On-board power:** 175W RMS ace-bass™ amplifier
- Dimensions:** 320(h) x 320(w) x 320(d)mm
- Weight:** 12.7kg



HCC VERDICT

Audio pro Evo Design Collection
£1,300 Approx
Price check: www.techradar.com/472088

Highs: Tremendously crisp detail; wide dispersion of high frequencies for believable soundscapes

Lows: Limited in output scale; only available in bright white

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5