

Induction Dynamics ID1 Loudspeaker

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DRIVERS IN A BOX; what can be so hard? A little wire, some kind of crossover usually, maybe just a capacitor. It is fun to try and you'll end up with something that turns an electrical signal to sound. The degree of success can be judged in several ways but ultimately the builder/designer has to say "done." In the end, it is the buying customer who has the last word. It's my experience that too many great speakers remain virtually unknown to very many audiophiles. Such is the culture we live in, information is overwhelming us now from every direction and popularity is no indication of excellence. The haystack has exploded exponentially (but now we have the "search" function or Google!).

My dad was pretty handy and about 1970 had built his own pair of largish bookshelf speakers using JBL components and an off-the-shelf crossover from a place called Speaker City located in the San Fernando Valley. I helped a little, as I recall, and they sounded good to me, far better than the neighbors' credenza systems. While we knew the limits of the bottom-of-the-line Marantz receiver to power those speakers, I had no similar concerns about the fidelity of the ceramic cartridge on our turntable. Almost all music sounded good to me, and my Dad turned me on to Ellington, Basie, and Gabor Szabo while I was also into the now classic rock of the period. Now, if my Dad had been Bill Hecht, the inventor of the soft dome tweeter, maybe I would have gotten a better start in my pursuit of hi-fi, but Ken Hecht, Bill's son, didn't take things for granted. He earned an engineering degree and an MBA before he went into the family business. I'd already reviewed the Induction Dynamics S1.8Ts which I very much liked and was intrigued when I heard about the redesign of the ID1.

Induction Dynamics is part of the MSE Audio Group, which includes Phase Technology, SolidDrive, Soundtube, and Rockustics. These folks know sound, both consumer and commercial. They hold several patents, and perhaps the oldest is for the soft dome tweeter, invented by the late Bill Hecht when he designed and built speakers for Fisher. They hold another for "Wide Area Phase Alignment" that matches on- and off-axis driver behavior both vertically and horizontally. The wide angle is made possible by the S4X crossover, which is patented by Induction Dynamics; the soft dome is a United Speaker patent.

The ID1 speakers are a four-way tower speaker with a defeatable subwoofer via a rear switch. That is, they

just a little toe in. Then to break them in, I just drove them with my satellite receiver's Toslink output which sounds great through my DAC. I left the system on low all day and at night, while watching some TV shows and films.

Right from the start, I was quite impressed with how the sound seemed to have nothing to do with the speakers. In fact, I had the uncanny perception that the sound was coming from my flat screen which is located about three feet behind where the speakers were. I brought up the volume and the amount of detail was staggering, the depth of the sound field ridiculous. I let the system play, mostly at very low volume, a little over a week. Then I was ready for some music.

The ID1 speakers will take you to the recording venue, rather than bringing it to your room.

consider it a three-way design with integrated dual 10-inch subwoofers. They also make models with 15- and 18-inch woofers! This model was redesigned this year with the upper sub driver spaced to alleviate floor-bounce resonances.

They are impressive speakers visually at 56 inches tall, 11 wide, and 10.5 in depth. The review models arrived in a rich and glossy wood finish and were beautiful. The company offers dozens of finishes, too, including custom colors or graphics, as well as custom grilles.

The crossover type is their own patented S4X super 4th order with almost 30-db-per-octave slopes at 80, 700, and 3800 Hz. This is also where the phase alignment is accomplished. Drivers are a 1.125-inch, titanium, inverted-dome, phase controlled tweeter; a three-inch soft dome midrange, and a 6.5-inch Kevlar woofer not found in the S1.8T. The subwoofers are dual 10-inch, mica-graphite poly cone drivers, with a cast frame and rubber surrounds. They specify the three-way portion as having a nominal impedance of eight ohms, having 89 dB for one-watt, at one meter, while the subs are 4 ohms and 89 dB/1w/1m as well.

The large rear speaker cable posts are the best I've used and are strapped so that the subs can be driven by a separate amp. The rear panel switch can defeat the internal subwoofer crossover for use with a separate subwoofer crossover and amp. I ran them full range all the time of the review period. The top portion can handle 200 watts, while the subs are rated at 600 watts maximum. When I first looked at the ID1s standing before me, with their five drivers per speaker, I was afraid I was going to hate them. "How can all these drivers work together smoothly?" I thought to myself. I try to never make any judgment calls until the speakers are setup perfectly and broken in. One review pair I had here I hated for almost two weeks as I tried and tried to move and adjust and tilt them and until they finally hit a point of true invisibility. Patience was rewarded. But I didn't have that set-up difficulty, as the ID1s were very good out of the box. There was some little improvement over time, but not a great deal.

I placed the ID1s exactly where I had the similarly sized S1.8Ts, nine feet away and nine feet apart with

Drawing on my memory and rereading my review of the Induction Dynamics S1.8Ts, which I had liked very much, I tried to recall that model and its sound. The ID1s are mostly the same drivers, at least to my eye, but also have a six-inch Kevlar mid-bass driver making them a four way. Indeed, these drivers are very well matched, and the crossover is right on to my ears. The center image is more solid, defined, and palpable than anything I recall hearing. The depth is also formidable, beyond just a perceived layering; instruments seemed to have depth, width and a realistic space of their own.

Hearing a phrase or flourish move through the players in a big band or orchestra was breath taking. Take Debussy's *La Mer*, (I use the Cala edition by the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Geoffrey Simon), where the flow of waves and water is emulated by the orchestra; the ID1s deftly present this movement, doing so in a most dramatic fashion. The music flows in all directions, very tenderly and softly at first, but then more rousing as the piece proceeds. There is no loss of scale here. Most stereo reproductions of symphonic recordings are often a bit of a miniature representation. Here is an argument winner about large tall speakers which can blow out the walls and ceiling when you close your eyes.

These ID1 speakers take you to the recording venue, rather than bring it into your home. This is also really excellent for movies and the clarity can be startling in the case of a phone ringing or sirens in the background. My cats and I perked our ears many times, for the realism was really there. It added to the intensity of a good film and the throbbing bass and epic rumblings of suspense and super heroes were loud and clear.

That Kevlar 6.5-inch driver, covering 70 to 800 Hz range, seems key to the great presence and low distortion. Voices seemed preternaturally present. The chest tones or notes especially were reproduced in a way that was flawless. The lowest sounds and gutturals are just amazing with spoken word as well as with gifted singers, where even the most subtle nuances can be appreciated. Sibilance remained within the image of the singer and not spread out as happens with inferior tweeters.

The clarity and distinct ordering of all the elements allowed me to hear and understand many more lyrics on songs where the singer is buried in a dense mix. There is no constriction of image or dynamics when things get frenzied or complex. The illusion is rock solid throughout. Every type of music or soundtrack benefited when it was well done. Cheesy reverb, crunchy micro-

The Opus One Test LP 1 is truly a wonder. This label's single-point stereo recordings, which use all hand-tweaked tube gear, remains my gold standard reference as a recording engineer. Played through the ID1s, this well-played CD pretty much blew me away and consistently had me rapt with attention. The detail and space are fabulous, unmatched by any other label I know.

The ID1s are the time and space machines I've always sought; they magically disappear.

phones, bad fades and less-than-perfect edits were impossible to ignore but sometimes the strength of the parts and talents of great players were able to bring a tune to life despite a bad mix.

A terrible recording a client of mine made of their terrible stereo, replete with hum and handling noises, was nonetheless eerily present. Although in near mono, I could hear the ambience of their room clearly. These were old tyme fiddle tunes and the tinny tone and scratchiness sort of suited them but these speakers laid it bare without editorializing.

Synth pads, rhythm guitars, and harmony instruments were so spatially set apart from each other and the lead instruments and voices, they could be easily followed independently in the midst of an arrangement. Double- and triple-tracked voices were easy to discern. Similarly, with well-recorded symphonic music, individual instruments inhabited their own space firmly within the panorama. Reverbs, echoes, and especially the fake environments of television dialogue were clean and clear and all too distinct in that instance.

I marveled at how well the ID1 handled snare drums from many different recordings and many eras. There was zero fatigue and, in fact, I was playing the recordings louder than I usually do because, as the level rose, the breadth of the acoustic of the recording enveloped the room more and more. Yet the reproduced sound did not seem to be purely louder; it was a strange effect and neat.

I found I was listening to and enjoying a lot more music than usual. Together with a great turntable and these speakers, I was digging through my vinyl collection for the best sounding discs.

I have always thought that Laurie Anderson's *Mister Heartbreak* album was one of those records for a Desert Island. Her voice was angelic, expressive, and ironic. The backing tracks here are perfection. Taunting, soothing, haunting, the background vocals seemed to be coming from everywhere. Some instruments even seemed eerily up-front present in my listening room or over there, deep off in a dark corner. *Kokoku* always gives me goose bumps, this time the hair on my arms stood up too.

Another LP which I consider as having phenomenal sound is *A Maid in Bedlam* by the John Renbourn Group. Recorded in 1977, this all-acoustic masterpiece of traditional British Folk music just sounds so unveiled and clear, it is absolutely scary. The performances are just excellent. These speakers take it to another level for me. I feel like I am in the same room with the group, their breathing is so clear.

In the '70s and the '80s, there were myriad records made by smaller groups and artists with fantastic instrumental visions in many genres, but fusion and prog, in particular, were fertile ground. These weren't just holiday projects and cover tributes but artist- and producer-based works. I love finding completely unknown collaborations, ones never on the radio or any chart. Sometimes, little if any promotion was done on these projects, and I buy batches of such CDs from bargain bins for peanuts; occasionally, they turn out to be wonderful. Usually, I find them exploring one musician's discography. It is fun. Everything can be found online now. Gemm or Half.com get my business all the time.

One I am listening to now, Randy Bernson's *Mo' Wasabi* is nearly a treasure and has guest musicians

NOTES

Induction Dynamics ID1 Loudspeaker, \$13,000.00. Induction Dynamics, 8005 W. 110th St., Overland Park, KS 66210; phone 855/663-5600; web site www.inductiondynamics.com; see web site for local e-mail addresses.

Associated Equipment

Krell KAV-300iL integrated amplifier; Monolithic PS-1 phono stage with HS-1 power supply; Mod Squad modified SOTA Sapphire turntable; Technics tonearm with Benz Ref MC phono cartridge; Goldring mat and clamp; Tip Toes; VPI 16.5 record cleaner; North Star Designs M192 DAC; Audio Alchemy Digital Drive System transport/player; Pioneer Elite D45A universal player w/IEC adapter; Echo Audio Layla 3G audio interface; Human Solutions Quad-core PC DAW; Dish Network VIP722 satellite receiver; Tara Labs Toslink and Stealth Sextet BNC digital cable, Stealth M-21 Signature and Stealth Indra audio cables; Stealth M7000, M7 Signature, Cloud 9, and Cloud 99 a.c. cables; Black Diamond Racing and Polycrystal cones; Shakti Stone; Chang Lightspeed CLS 6400 power conditioner; PS Audio Power Port wall outlet; Auralex acoustic foam tiles, and DIY Bass Traps.