

## Audience 122 C



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Dynaudio Audience 82 / 122C / 42W / SUB-30A  
Home-Theater Speaker System

Reviewed by  
Anthony Di Marco



I was very excited when I heard that I would be evaluating Dynaudio's Audience line of loudspeakers. The Danish loudspeaker company's reputation amongst audio lovers is one of almost mythic proportions. Unfortunately, many fans have been deterred from owning these speakers because of their lofty price. For a long time the least-expensive choice was the Contour series. In response to those seeking more affordable Dynaudios, the company created the Audience series, of which a \$5885 USD system was assembled for review here. After countless refinements Dynaudio believes that they have a design that strikes the perfect balance between affordability and fidelity.

The latest refinement to the model line addresses one of the few complaints the Audience product line has received: the finish. These speakers are now available with real-wood veneer in place of the previously available vinyl-wrapped enclosures. But while customers may think that this is simply a cosmetic upgrade, Dynaudio maintains there is more below the skin.

### They arrive

The smallish size of the Audience 122C center-channel took me off guard as I pulled it from its box. Its heavy and well-assembled cabinet is attractive, but not lavish. Starting around back there is a bass-reflex port and a single set of binding posts. At first the moderately substantial posts looked similar to those used on Canton's Ergo line and other speakers I've seen. But closer inspection revealed that these were true five-way binding posts that accepted everything from bare wire to banana plugs. Dynaudio is known for their raw drivers almost as much as their finished speakers. Although these drivers used to be available to do-it-yourselfers and other manufacturers, if you want 'em now you'll have to get them in their finished products. The driver complement of the Audience 122C includes two 15cm ESOTEC midbass drivers with massive 75mm voice coils and one 28mm soft-dome tweeter. According to Dynaudio the tweeter is a shielded version of their legendary D260 ESOTEC driver.

The "W" in the Audience 42W indicates a wall-mountable version of the Audience 42. Stretching and squishing the enclosure not only achieves a slender profile with the same internal volume, but also permits the bass-reflex port to be mounted to the front of the cabinet. Inset into the top rear of the cabinet is a sturdy metal eyelet that allows the speaker to be hung on a wall like a picture. Also included are small spikes, which decouple the 42W enclosure from the wall. The Audience 42W includes the same ESOTEC midbass driver as the Audience 122C along with a 28mm tweeter.

Like its smaller siblings, the Audience 82 features excellent fit'n'finish. The three-way floorstander also uses the same ESOTEC tweeter as the Audience 122C -- but this is where the similarities end. Although they may look similar from the outside, the ESOTEC midrange driver on the Audience 82 uses a voice coil that is roughly half the size (38mm) of the ones used in the 42W and 122C -- you can optimize each driver when you build your own. From there, two 20cm bass drivers enable the speaker to reproduce frequencies down to a claimed 26Hz!

Another unique feature of the Audience 82 that struck me as both brilliant and simple was four grommets affixed to the rear of its enclosure. For those who would rather gaze at the Audience 82's handsome array of drivers, these grommets offer a means of securing the grille out of sight and harm's way. The only issue I had with the Audience 82 was related to the wood hardware inserts that retained the supplied carpet spikes. These barbed inserts had a tendency to separate from the bass plinth if the spikes were accidentally screwed-in too deep. This resulted in the

Audience 82 developing a bit of a wobble to its stance. I have never come across this problem with designs that use threaded inserts.

Considering the other speakers in the Audience line, the Audience SUB-30A's cosmetics fall short of my expectations. Its black vinyl suggests a product not commensurate with the rest of the system. The 12" driver used in the SUB-30A has a 4" voice coil and is powered by a 90W amplifier. The control panel includes variable phase and crossover to dial the sub into your system.

In order to accommodate the new wood finish of the Audience line, changes in the manufacturing process prompted a complete redesign of the cabinet structure. Included in the new Audience speakers is a granite-like baffle fabricated from lead-impregnated MDF, which affords the driver elements improved isolation from resonance, and according to the company, has yielded a measurable improvement in sound quality.

### **Movie sound**

The first DVD I sampled was *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring -- Platinum Series Extended Edition*. The hurricane-like howl that surrounds Frodo each time he slips on the ring can possess an uncomfortable edge on a forward or bright system. The Dynaudio system not only gave this effect a smooth and open quality, but also convinced me that I was submersed in Sauron's world alongside Frodo.

Chapter 13 of the same movie sounded just as realistic. The scene where Frodo senses the Ringwraiths approaching was bone chilling due to the way the Audience system reproduced the sounds of the forest in my room. In addition, the extended "Council of Elrond" scenes revealed how adept the Audience system was at placing and reproducing intelligible voices. The Audience 122C in particular, not only kept voices anchored perfectly when they appeared center screen, but also integrated seamlessly with the 42W and 82s. This had the effect of allowing sounds to move out into the room rather than staying stuck to the walls. However, the greatest surprise came as Borimir succumbed to the power of the ring. The Audience 82 speakers flexed their muscles and produced powerful bass that caused my wife and me to jump.

The Audience 82s had no problem reproducing the deeper bass effects during *The Hunt for Red October*, which made it seem as if submarines were moving through my living room. Although I have seen the film several times, the soundtrack still surprised me. The Audience loudspeakers had enough shimmer and speed in their treble and midrange where "quick" effects like the zip of a torpedo through water, or the metal clank and reverberation of a hammer on a steel bulkhead, startled me without causing aural discomfort. I was also able to hear deeper into the effect and discern between the initial impacts of the hammer as it hit steel, and the ripple of overtones that followed. Some speakers don't have the control or integration between their drivers to reveal such harmonic subtlety. Many lesser speakers simply cram these details into one unidentifiable boom. Not the Dynaudios. Everything from the slightest breath to the largest explosion was crystal clear.

The Audience system did not sacrifice transparency for the sake of smoothness. The recently remastered director's cut of *Amadeus* demonstrated how well the Dynaudios are at revealing the seams within a sound mix without ruining the overall experience. The 122C rendered voices perfectly as Antonio Salieri is being carted off to the hospital. And it doesn't take a trained ear to spot the forced dynamic range of orchestral music or pick out some poorly produced foley effects.

Well-integrated drivers also empowered the Audience system to produce a seamless image. If bullets flew from screen left to surround right, the sound of the bullet cutting through the air moved consistently in that direction. If a person moved from one end of the room to the other, his footsteps would not miss a step during their travel. The synergy of the 82s, 122C, and 42Ws along with the low-bass capabilities of the center and surrounds kept sounds clean and well integrated within the surround image.

The added bulk of the Audience SUB-30A in my room contributed little to the sound quality of the 5.1 setup, such as the bass present with the Audience 82s. I found that bass from the 82s went deep enough and loud enough to satisfy me in most cases. Crossing the 82s over at 60Hz did earn the SUB-30A some points by adding a little more punch to explosions and slightly better definition. But in my setup I concluded that it wasn't worth the extra floor space or cash it consumed.

### **Music sound**

The Audience 82 belted out Peter Gabriel's "Big Time" (So [Universal 493284]) at levels that, according to my Radio Shack meter, approached 100dB. I didn't listen at this level for long, but I was impressed at how clean, smooth, and undistorted the music sounded. Gabriel's voice remained solidly anchored while instruments retained their distinctive sounds. Given adequate power, these are speakers that will get a party going and the neighbors running.

Next up was the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra's rendition of Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana* [Telarc CD-80056]. Although some consider Robert Shaw's interpretation to lack depth, this recording serves up some startling dynamics. The concluding movement, "Fortune Emperor of the World," sounded superb through the Audience speakers. The line between massive drums, a powerful choir, and the quiet moments never got lost. When the drums came charging in I could feel the wave of low-frequency energy hitting me in the chest. Through the Dynaudio system the dynamic range of music was perfectly preserved.

Moving on to the DTS recording of Sting's Brand New Day [DTS 91061], the Audience system enveloped me in a three-dimensional soundstage. Sting's voice was smooth with nice weight, while instruments appeared with distinct outlines and accurate tonality. Guitars sounded full and palpable while at the same time sidestepping the artificial weight some speakers add to each pluck of a string. I had a hard time pulling myself away from this recording. The subtle atmospheric effects in songs like "Desert Rose" and "Ghost Story" created a very intoxicating presentation through the Dynaudio speakers.

Each vocal reinforced my opinion of the Audience system's very detailed midrange. Where other speakers would lose track of leading or trailing consonants and vowels, the Audience speakers would complete every word. I started hearing "ma" turn into "man" and "mine" prove to be "mind." The ability of a song to tell a story lies not only in the music, but also in the words of the lyric. The Dynaudio system's ability to capture these lyrics correctly made a song more complete and therefore more enjoyable. What the Dynaudios did not exhibit was a euphoric or tube-like quality to their upper frequencies that made female vocals and strings more seductive. What I experienced was a speaker that preferred to let the music speak for itself.

#### **Danes versus ....**

The Dynaudio Audience system came into my home right after Canton's Ergo system. I was very impressed with the Cantons and ultimately purchased them as my reference. The Cantons and the Dynaudios are, however, voiced quite differently.

The Dynaudio system's midrange sounds slightly more refined and coherent to my ear. Voices and strings are a tad warmer. The Cantons have a little more energy in their upper midrange and treble that is relatively unforgiving of poor recordings. Vocals on early '80s pop have a tendency to sound thin through the Cantons, whereas the Dynaudios' smoother character adds warmth, which has the effect of beefing-up harmonic structure.

The Canton system's upper-midrange sparkle added excitement to brass and strings without becoming harsh. When cymbals crashed, the Canton's aluminum-alloy tweeter filled the room with startling attack followed by a natural decay. The Dynaudios exhibited excellent detail and decay but without the immediacy that raises the hairs on the back of my neck. This immediacy furnishes the Cantons with a more involving sound, but made them more sensitive to equipment with less-refined high frequencies.

Bass from both of the front speakers is first-class, but different. The Dynaudio Audience 82s have punch and extension while the Canton Ergo 900 DCs are subjectively leaner and tighter. There were times when I thought the Dynaudio's powerful bass lacked definition since the Cantons pulled more information from complex bass lines. I also found the fuller bass of the Dynaudio Audience 82s required at least three feet from back and side walls. Otherwise, their bass had a tendency to get muddy and boom.

Impressive build quality and tuneful bass singled out Canton's AS 2 SC as the subwoofer of choice. Of course the Audience 82's bass capability made subwoofers a non-issue in my room. Larger rooms may even benefit more from using four of these formidable floorstanders with a high-power multichannel amplifier, rather than a sub.

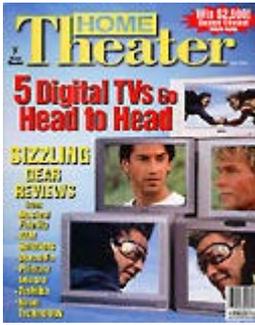
#### **Conclusion**

Dynaudio's newest Audience line will not only provide a very compelling home-theater experience, but also very involving music reproduction. The standout of this group is by far the Audience 82: Its combination of powerful, extended bass, refined midrange, and treble detail are a steal at the price. If you've thought about the Audience line in the past, but the vinyl finish turned you off, you can now have the bonus of real-wood veneer. The bottom line is that Dynaudio's Audience speakers deserve a strong look from anyone seeking a system in this price range.

#### **Review System**

Speakers - Canton Ergo 900 DC (mains), 300 DC (surrounds), CM 500 DC (center-channel), AS 2 SC (subwoofer)  
Receiver - B&K AVR 305  
Sources - Panasonic RP82S DVD player, Rotel RCD-991AE CD player, Sony CDP-XA7ES CD player  
Cables - BetterCables  
Monitor - Mitsubishi WT-46809 rear-projection widescreen monitor (with Duvetyne modification and red attenuation)

Link to review above - [HomeTheaterSound.com](http://HomeTheaterSound.com)



Home Theater, June 2001

Dynaudio Audience 42 Speaker System  
It's not how big it is but what you do with it.  
By Michael Trei

One thing that those of us who deal with equipment on a daily basis tend to forget is that the people who actually buy the stuff we evaluate live real lives, in real rooms, and often have real spouses and families to contend with. Back when I was working in a retail store, it was usually the guy who wanted the huge speakers and the wife or girlfriend who was hoping that all of the equipment could somehow just disappear. Let's face it: Most of us don't have the space for a dedicated home theater room, and we still need to live in our living rooms when we're not watching movies. To avoid having our home theater system take over our living space, many of us end up settling for a puny home-theater-in-a-box or, even worse, a shelf system. What if you could get a setup that had most of the qualities of a big home theater system but that didn't dominate your space? As long as you're willing to make certain compromises, it can be done.

I've looked at several tiny speaker setups. In almost every case, the diminutive size of the speakers is due more to cost restraints than a wish to make something in a small package that will perform impressively. The Audience 42 is Danish manufacturer Dynaudio's least expensive system, yet it could hardly be called cheap. There are plenty of packages with huge speakers that you could get for the same amount of money, but they wouldn't approach this level of quality. Dynaudio's goal was to make the speakers smaller, not necessarily cheaper. Most of the cost concessions are in cosmetic areas rather than performance-related ones.

If you browse through a directory of hi-fi companies, you'll see that anyone and his brother can start a speaker company. All you need to do is slap some drivers and a crossover in a box, then go find some sucker to buy it. Dynaudio, on the other hand, is one of the few speaker manufacturers that makes all of their own drivers. These raw drivers are so widely respected that they are used by some of the best high-end companies around, including Wilson Audio and Totem Acoustic. The five main speakers in the Audience 42 system all use a 5.75-inch woofer that incorporates a characteristically huge 3-inch voice coil, along with a custom-designed version of Dynaudio's famous Esotec soft-dome tweeter. Although the main, center, and surround speakers have been carefully designed to perform best in a specific role, by using the same driver complement in all five speakers, the timbral match is likely to be excellent.

The main speaker I used was the Audience 42, a small, ported design that uses a narrow front baffle to give possible focus to the stereo image. The port is on the back, making it best-suited for use out away from the wall on stands, although a wall bracket is available. Because many folks are likely to be tempted by the urge to put these speakers near a wall or on a bookshelf, Dynaudio has included a foam plug that can be stuffed in the port to reduce the bass-loading effect of boundary positioning. When I used them on a pair of 24-inch metal stands placed well clear of the walls, I found I got the best results with-out the plugs, as this allowed the speakers to blend more effectively with the subwoofer. Although the cherry finish is about as natural as Anna Nicole Smith's bust-line, the quality of vinyl used is about as good as it gets, and for a minute I was fooled into thinking a real tree was involved in this speaker's manufacture. It's a pity that Dynaudio couldn't put this stuff on the front baffle, as I did find that there was a small but worthwhile sonic benefit to using the speakers naked, sans grilles.

The Audience 42C center channel uses the same two drivers as the main Audience 42. Note that I said two drivers. That's right: Unlike most center speakers that have two woofers flanking the tweeter (seemingly in a desperate attempt to preserve symmetry), the 42C gets along just fine with a single woofer and probably benefits from a wider listening window because of this approach. The problem with side-by-side woofers is that an off-center listener is going to hear rather ragged midrange response, due to the comb filtering created when two drivers reproducing the same signal are different distances from your noggin. One way to get around this issue is to make a three-way center channel, which allows the crossover to the woofers to be low enough so that it won't matter as much, but I actually like Dynaudio's approach more. As this speaker is more likely to be used in a cabinet near a TV set, the company decided to move the port from the back to the front, and again there is a foam plug you can stick in the port to dampen the woofer's movement in the low bass.

Although some people like to use in-wall models as stealth-like surround speakers, getting their sound to blend properly with the front speakers can some-times be quite a challenge. Dynaudio's solution is the Audience 42W, which they describe as an on-wall speaker. This specially designed model uses a wider, shallower cabinet, allowing the speaker to be placed on the side walls without sticking out too far into your room. Again, the ports have been moved around to the front, and the bass can be further tuned using the provided foam plugs. Although the wider baffle is likely to make pinpoint imaging more difficult, this is not such critical requirement for surround speakers, where you typically want a more-diffuse image. The 42W can be hung directly on the wall using the keyhole on the back or mounted using a bracket available from Dynaudio. The review samples were finished in the same petroleum-based cherry as the other speakers, although any of these models can be ordered in a white laminate with white grilles (for an additional cost), making them even less conspicuous.

Rather than jumping on the bandwagon to make one of those tiny subwoofers with an immensely powerful amplifier, Dynaudio has stuck with a more-conventional approach. The SUB-20A uses one of Dynaudio's large-voice-coil 10-inch woofers in a moderately large ported cabinet. This makes it pretty efficient. The built-in 90-watt amplifier is enough to drive it to loud levels in a small- to medium-sized room. Flexibility is the SUB-20A's strong point, with separate mono and stereo RCA inputs, a high-pass output with a switchable 80-hertz filter, plus a low-pass filter that can be adjusted continuously between 60 and 120 Hz and even rotated continuously in phase through 360 degrees. This adjustability should make it easier to get a good blend between the small Audience 42s and the subwoofer in a wide range of rooms. Although the power amp stays on continuously until you turn off the power switch on the back panel, it draws

only 10 watts at idle—that's less than, say, a VCR draws when turned off.

I've always enjoyed the sound of a good two-way mini-monitor in my stereo system, and the Audience 42 certainly fits that bill. As I was breaking in the other speakers, I spent a week with the Audience 42s in place of the usual Quad Electrostatics in my two-channel setup, and I never really found myself missing my regular speakers. What struck me immediately was how refined the sound was. The high frequencies, in particular, had a combination of impressive detail and exceptional smoothness that you only hear in a speaker with an exceptional tweeter. As you would expect with a speaker this tiny, bass was somewhat curtailed, dropping off quickly below about 60 Hz. Up to that point, however, the bass was tight and tuneful, and the speaker was very communicative, tuneful, and engaging. Midrange detail was a strength, lending a transparency to the overall picture. With the wrong material, though, the upper midrange could sound a little forward at times. Little boxes are usually a good ingredient for achieving a focussed stereo image, and the Audience 42 delivers with an open, spacious sound capable of impressive depth.

Luckily, in a home theater system, we can hand the bass-playing requirements over to the subwoofer, and I found that I needed to play all five speakers in the small mode to get the best overall balance from the system. Sensitivity is not the Audience 42's forte, so don't get the impression that you can drive these little speakers with some puny little receiver. Because of the exceptional dynamic demands of many movie sound-tracks, I'd suggest a minimum of about 100 watts per channel to get a good sense of dynamic punch. Even then, dynamics are not going to be the Audience 42 ensemble's strong suit.

As I found with the two-channel setup, this system was at its best with more-natural-sounding movies and music, rather than when it was attempting to be an aural assault weapon. A movie like *Fight Club*, with its amazing surround effects and ambience that changes dramatically from scene to scene, really takes on a naturally relaxed quality that makes it simple to listen to for hours without suffering fatigue. This sense of ease was especially impressive with the center channel, and dialogue like Mr. Hand's voice in *Dark City* was amazingly clear and articulate. This center-channel speaker would perform well in many systems, even if the rest of the speakers were not from Dynaudio.

After considerable experimentation with the level and phase controls, and in getting the best possible placement, I found I was able to get an essentially seamless blend between the SUB-20A and the rest of the speakers. It's a pity that Dynaudio doesn't allow you to bypass the internal crossover in favor of the one in your pre/pro, as this would probably make the adjustments somewhat easier. Once you do have it locked in, the SUB-20A does a good job of filling in the bottom two octaves, although without the air-moving capabilities of some of its competitors. As with the main speakers, the SUB-20A's strengths are its tunefulness and pitch accuracy—a far cry from some of those 12-inch cube woofers that have become the rage.

For someone trying to fit a home theater into a real living space, the Dynaudio Audience 42 system fits well into the often-neglected niche of really small speaker systems that don't skimp on quality. While it won't rouse the neighbors or assault your eardrums quite like some bigger systems, I suspect that these are not the qualities a potential purchaser will be looking for. Recommended.



What Hi-Fi, May 2001  
Dynaudio a Hit with big Audience

With multichannel music around the corner the need for speaker packages able to play a tune as well as rattle the sofa has become ever more pressing. The Dynaudio 122 package, made up from the Danish company's acclaimed Audience series of hi-fi speakers, aims to do this.

Unlike most home cinema specialist, Dynaudio eschews multi-directional rear surround speakers in favour of conventional designs, namely the Audience 42W rears (the 'W' stands for wall-mount). In essence these are compact versions of the Audience 42s, with a shallower cabinet (18cm, against 25cm for the conventional designs). A fixing allows these to be hung from the wall, too.

considerable effort has been expended on the design of the front three speakers. The floorstanding Audience 122s (also available separately at £920 a pair) sport a single 28mm soft-dome tweeter flanked by a pair of 15cm mid/bass drivers, while the Audience 122C centre uses exactly the same configuration, though mounted in the cabinet. All three are magnetically shielded, so even the stereo pair can be used close to your TV set with no fear of distorting the picture, but there's no provision for biwiring.

Though it takes some time to bed in fully this is a wonderful speaker package. Each driver integrates seamlessly, while the sheer presence of the sound from the front three speakers is exemplary. What's more, the Audience 122s have ample bass – certainly enough for normal listening levels – which means they deliver a full, muscular tone with *Amistad*'s deep vocal pitches. Only very deep bass eludes the package, but then the sheer energy on offer with the rest of a movie soundtrack is infectious.

Switching to music, and a five-channel remix on DVD Audio of Deep Purple's *Machine Head*, and the balance is both expressive and thoroughly well focussed, complete with frenetic guitar picking on 'Lazy'. Those same virtues are equally applicable with stereo listening, using solely the 122s. Indeed, you'll find few more communicative, exciting yet poised speakers at this price.

Drawbacks? Not many. Home cinema headbangers may well wish to add a subwoofer, while none of the speakers is

an easy load. Stiff 4ohm impedance coupled to 86dB/W/m sensitivity could cause some low-powered multichannel amplifiers a few palpitations, but you're unlikely to have any problems with most comparably priced designs. Our only real gripe is that the rear speakers lack the wraparound ambience of a good pair of dipoles, but then that's the price you have to pay for musicality, and this package carries that role off superbly.



E-Gear, March/April 2001

Dynaudio Audience Home Theater Speaker System  
Well Balanced for Your Audio Protection  
By Mike McGann

In a small factory in Denmark, Dynaudio has spent most of the last 17 or so years turning out speakers, slowly. In an average year, only about 30,000 speakers leave the factory. Like a fine wine, Dynaudio takes its time. Such patience has won the company fans, including the BBC, which is using its drivers for monitors in its recording studio in London. Sony, of all companies, uses Dynaudio speakers in its studios in New York and Tokyo.

In fairness, this high level of quality has generally come at a pretty high price. Thankfully, the company has slowly and quietly been moving toward somewhat more affordable price levels, without resorting to mass production methods. This introduction of the Audience line of speakers a couple of years back was a nice foray into the mid-priced speaker market.

We were able to get the new, updated Audience 62 towers (which replace the well-liked 60s), with Audience 42 monitors for the surround, matched to the 42C center-channel speaker. The low-end grunt comes from the Audience 20A sub, which features a 90-watt amp powering a front-firing 10-inch driver. While the entire system, at just under \$4,000 is not exactly budget minded, it makes sense to spend a bit on speakers if you've already spent \$3,000 to \$4,000 on electronic. I matched the new Audience system to Onkyo's TX-DS989 a/v receiver, in part for its ability to handle six-channel DVD-Audio inputs.

Not being the patient type, I put off my usual testing of the system in stereo mode and instead dove right in using JVC's wondrous XV-D723GD DVD-Audio player (reviewed elsewhere in this issue). Using Emerson, Lake & Palmer's Brain Salad Surgery, an album programmed into my head by my older brother Jim back in the days of Nixon, I was completely blown away.

In part, I was wowed by the whole DVD-Audio thing, which I address elsewhere in this issue. Mostly, I was seriously impressed at how well integrated this Audience system is. A lot of the first DVD-Audio releases use pans and rotation, as John Kellogg of Dolby did in his loving remix of this title. If the rears of centers are not perfectly matched to the mains, it would be pretty obvious quickly.

Thankfully, Dynaudio's 42 and 42C work exceptionally well with the 62s. It took a bit more work with the 20A subwoofer to get it to sound good, mostly fiddling with the crossover point and the gain (volume). Since you can't easily fix any speaker system shortcomings with your receiver (the DVD-Audio path runs directly through the amps, bypassing the digital-to-analog converters), this Audience system is perfect for matching with your brand-spanking-new DEV-A player.

Eventually, I did get around to listening to primitive two-channel audio, resorting to my usual test discs, Queen's A Day at the Races completely cooked, with warm bass and a strong midrange. The sound stage was very deep and wide, and detail was nothing short of miraculous. Once in a great while, I did notice a bit of spittiness on the high end, and some vocals, such as Freddie Mercury's in Somebody to Love, sounded a tiny bit brittle, but not enough to really bother me.

Not surprisingly, I found the Dynaudios even better with movie soundtracks, such as Star Trek: first Contact and Dances With Wolves. The 42C, with its single woofer, delivered sharp and clear dialogue and kept audio pans around the front very smooth. I did notice that the sub seemed to lack punch slightly once in a while, something that seemed more noticeable while watching movies than when listening to music. If it were up to me, I'd have probably opted for the slightly more powerful 30A sub, which would probably resolve my issues. The 20A seems better suited to a smaller system, maybe on made up entirely of Audience 42s.

The more I used these speakers, the more I found they lacked any serious weakness, no matter how I used them. Considering the number of systems I've heard that are either excellent for music but merely competent for the other, Dynaudio has done a nice job creating a product that seems to suit any audio purpose.

While I picked a couple of very minor nits, rest assured that the Audience system is right at the top of the class for this price range. I've heard systems that are better, but only at prices that would drain the blood from your face in a nanosecond. Keep in mind, I've heard system that cost more than twice as much as the Dynaudios but don't sound half as good.

If you've been thinking about upgrading to an audiophile-grade home theater system, the Dynaudio Audience speaker line is a great place to start, although opt for the bigger subwoofer. From what I heard, you'll be very happy, whether you love movies or music.