



Audience 72

Audio Musings, 2001

Dynaudio 72

As reviewed by Carlo Flores, Francisco Duran, and Bryan Gladstone

The shipping box for Dynaudio's Audience 72 loudspeakers contains the phrase "Danes don't lie." A blanket statement about an entire group of people is never a good thing, but as far as the Audience 72s go, it's as true as it gets. Speakers in the \$1500 price range shouldn't be this revealing and transparent—the hierarchy of high end audio can't allow it. Dynaudio focused their compromises on the incidentals, offering only one set of not-so-fancy binding posts (this does bother me, as I'm a big proponent of biwiring) and barely passable wood veneer. But the sound! Big, open, and involving. These speakers have the ability to disappear completely. Performers occupy space in tight focus and within a convincing soundstage.

Ani DiFranco's new double CD *Reckoning/Revelling* is an audiophile's wet dream—great music that isn't restricted by overproduction and compromised recording techniques. The Audience 72s let it all out, allowing me to get sucked into the performance, emotionally and analytically. On "tamburitza lingua" (track four on *Revelling*), Ani is dead center, bongo drums are a few feet behind her to the right, a guitar is up front to the left, and an unidentifiable instrument floats between the speakers. This is goosebumps good. I'm there all the way, hands flailing, foot tapping, lost in the performance. So kill me, I'm a music lover.

One of my references is The Velvet Underground's *Loaded*, in Rhino's "Fully Loaded" remaster. Lou Reed and friends have a special magic that a system can easily lose, but the Audience 72s passed nicely. "Sweet Jane" has that killer bass line, interwoven with Lou's voice, fantastic cymbal work, and stripped-down guitars. Once again, I was right there, grooving along. "Lonesome Cowboy Bill" had dynamics galore, with very nice pace. On Tricky's *Maxinquaye* (an electronica album that was ahead of its time), the bottom end was solid, and did not slow down the proceedings in any way—always tight and fast, with an airy ambience that's part of Tricky's trademark sound. Let's get critical with audio speak for a second. The Audience 72s have the blatant honesty of the NHT 2.5s without the slightly etched treble and thin presentation that always bothered me about those speakers. They keep the PSB Stratus Silvers' musicality without sounding too thick, which in my experience the Stratus speakers have a habit of doing. They're just accurate, without imparting a whole lot of character to the sound. I know what my electronics do tight and what they do wrong; my system is slightly forgiving, with decent detail and a solid soundstage. The Dynaudios didn't hide any of that, and they didn't color the sound to mask its deficiencies (as my Stratus Bronzes do).

What are the downsides? The Dandy Warhols' *Tales From Urban Bohemia* and *Come Down*, and Modest Mouse's *The Moon and Antarctica* sounded unfocused, a byproduct of the recording. For the independent and avant-garde music enthusiast, these speakers may be too "hi-fi." I also noted a slight treble rolloff on Stevie Wonder's *Hotter Than July* and Moby's *Play*. This is nitpicking. If your electronics are up to par, these speakers are a bargain. They're so demanding that they made me want to upgrade everything else in my system. To me, that's one of the greatest compliments a speaker can receive.

My verdict? Recommended for both audiophile and music lover. Any speakers that get soundstage, transparency, and pace right are okay by me. Take a look at the price tag and it's a no-brainer. I listened to a ton of music through these things. They did the Deftones and Smashing Pumpkins well, they excelled with Billie Holiday and Joni Mitchell. They can handle electronica and bass-heavy material. I'm sure others will find much to fault, but for me they're a great value. Take a listen if you're looking to build a fantastic system.
Carlo Flores

TWO

The Dynaudio Audience 72s are slim floorstanding, two-way loudspeakers. Although the Audience series is Dynaudio's least expensive speaker line, a lot of engineering and quality went into the design of the 72s. With dimensions of 38 inches high by 8 inches wide and a front-firing port, they should be easy to place in most listening rooms. The two woofers are 17mm polypropylene cones with 75mm pure aluminum wire voice coils. The tweeter, which uses the same material for its voice coil, is a 28mm soft dome unit. Nominal impedance is 4 ohms and sensitivity is 86 dB, which is somewhat less sensitive than my speakers, though I found that my 70-watt Monarchy Audio monoblocks drove them to quite loud levels.

The cabinets are sturdy and appear to be well braced internally. They have a vinyl finish instead of wood veneer, but I found their cherry finish attractive. Several visitors to my house also liked the looks of these speakers. (And no, I don't have velvet Elvis painting or posters of dogs playing cards in my den!) Switching from my ProAc Response 2s to the 72s, what struck me first was their similarity. The 72s made me feel right at home with their fast and dynamic sound. The mids were smooth and bass was taut, fast, and extended. Listening to some blues, I found the 72s' mid to top end cooler and more neutral than my speakers'. Orchestras sounded slightly more extended. In the vocal range and above, the music sounded a little more textured. Sibilance, though, was ever so slightly whiter sounding.

I have to admit that I came to these speakers with a slight prejudice. I once auditioned one of Dynaudio's Contour series at a dealer, and found their top end too hot, so the seed was planted before I even listened to the 72s, although I have to say that the 72s did not sound hot. In fact I found them somewhat cool, with a more neutral timbre than my speakers. I've been noticing lately that the ProAcs have a faint "yellowish" coloration in the upper mids. This is why they can sound "hot" if not properly set up. The Response 2s do have an airier, cleaner, and more dimensional treble response than the 72s, but if they outclassed my speakers in this regard, Dynaudio would probably not need their Contour line. When you consider the price difference and the extra bass you get with the 72s, the difference might seem less important. With careful setup, one can have a high level of musical performance at real world prices with these speakers.

The bass performance of the 72s was very good. They brought a scale to orchestra that my little standmounters just can't muster. Orchestra swells and crescendos were more full and exciting. In my 12-foot wide room, the stage was expansive. That's another complaint that I could launch at my speakers-after listening to a few floorstanders, they sometimes sound small! For dynamics, I listened to my Gov't Mule CD, and the Dynaudios manhandled it. Bass response was fast, extended, and articulate. As energetic as the 72s are, they also have a delicate side. My mellower discs did not sound forced or uptight. There was a smooth and easy flow to the music. By comparison, my Response 2s at times sound a bit stiff.

So are the Audience 72s world beaters? Well, they are and they aren't. They could use a little more refinement in the treble and mids. A little more sweetness and dimension wouldn't hurt either. I wish I could have mated them to the 50-watt Antique Sound Labs AQ100IDT tube amp, but I didn't have the speakers and the amp at my house at the same time. That might have been a sweet and musical combo.

While we're at it, I would wrap the 72s in real wood veneer, too, but if you want that, go for the Contour line.

The 72s really surprised me when I was putting them through their paces. Just when I thought that the treble was going to get out of hand, or those four woofers were going to overload the room, they kept their composure. In their price range, they give the likes of Paradigm, PSB, and B&W a run for the money. Check out the Audience 72s. The money you save could go toward your retirement!
Francisco Duran

THREE

I have a more than passing interest in Dynaudio speakers due to several intriguing encounters at dealers and at audio shows. The Dynaudio reputation for quality precedes it, and many of its designs are straightforward, two-way, ported box designs like my beloved ProAcs. I tend to prefer simple designs, if they are well executed, over more elaborate designs with multiple drivers and complicated crossovers.

After pulling the Audience 72s from the box (a job that requires a bit of effort but can be managed by one person), I noticed their vinyl veneer. Although vinyl is not my first choice for both aesthetic and sonic reasons, the 72s are so handsome that I can't quibble. Seams, comers, and fittings are all perfectly finished. In fact, the veneer could easily be mistaken for the real McCoy at a distance. One feature of the speaker really got me excited. Speaker grills are almost always audible, giving a sound akin to wrapping the speaker in a blanket, but the 72s have grill-hanging sockets on the back of each speaker. While listening, the grills can be removed from the front and securely attached to the back. Since the 72s are front ported, this doesn't affect the sound. Bravo!! My only real complaint with the design of the 72s is that there is no option for mass loading, which omits a final opportunity for fine-tuning.

I began my listening with very mixed opinions, but the 72s grew on me over several weeks. The process began with the placement dance, until I found that the 72s worked best in almost precisely the same location as my ProAcs. This is probably because of their similar two-way designs and the fact that the drivers of the floorstanding Dynaudios were at almost the same height as those of the stand-mounted ProAcs. Commencing serious listening, I was taken by the 72s' bass weight and warmth, possibly because this is typically missing when listening to minimonitors. The 72s are not the last word in bass control. They don't have the wallop of large drivers in big boxes, nor the tonal control in the nether regions that the very best speakers can deliver. However, they don't attempt the extreme lows, and roll off gracefully without bringing any attention to themselves. They have more than enough weight to convey the convincing illusion of an orchestra in a large hall.

After several weeks, I began to feel the 72s were lacking something, especially when listening to rock or jazz. Dynamics felt a bit spongy, and fortissimos were not as powerful as I would have liked. I don't believe that this softness was due to the character of the speakers, but to the fact that they wanted more power than I had to offer. The leading edges of transients were softened, and a bit too relaxed, a phenomenon I have heard many times when underpowering speakers. Confirmation came when I noticed the bias lights solidly lit on my amplifier. When driving my ProAcs, these lights are off most of the time, illuminating only momentarily on transients, and only when played loudly. Therefore, to sound their best, the Audience 72s need some power. The manufacturer recommends at least sixty-five watts in a medium-sized room. My guess is more like 100-200 watts from a quality solid state amplifier.

The midrange of the 72s mates seamlessly with the bass and is silky smooth in nature. Although the 72s are not as transparent or revealing as I am used to, the mids have a warm, velvety quality that is both inviting and musical. There is a slight chesty quality that I feel is an departure from reality, but it is minimal, and might even be compensated for by careful system and cable selection. Overall frequency response is very smooth until you reach the very top end, where I detected a bit of crispiness. I am talking about the sort of crispies that make s'es sound like the hissing of a snake. This did not occur with human voice, as it was much higher in frequency. It was as if a very high frequency overtone were laid over each cymbal crash. The frequency was well above that of any instrument and was therefore "separate" from the music. Many will be able to listen right through this, just as we listen through the surface

noise of an LP. We all have our pet peeves, though, and this is an area that I am especially sensitive to.

Although timbrally more accurate, the ProAcs throw an abbreviated soundstage. Not so the Dynaudios. Musicians have a more lifelike size through the 72s. Their soundstage depth and width are average, and while the 72s don't have the sense of openness and air that some speakers achieve, I rarely missed it. These shortcomings were overcome by their ability to totally disappear. There is no sense of the music emerging from point sources, and the image center fills in beautifully. I've never heard a speaker of such modest price pull off a disappearing act this well. The lack of boxiness gave music the sense of ease necessary to allow me to relax and enjoy music.

I sometimes sit entire evenings in front of my stereo, completely immersed. To me audio equipment is the window through which I watch the world. Many of my favorite components have areas of performance that I critique vehemently, yet these complaints have little effect on my musical enjoyment. And so, despite a few criticisms of the Dynaudios, as I listened to them, the world spoke to me.
Bryan Gladstone

This model is so new that no reviews have yet been conducted. Please check back as reviews are often added to this site. Thank you.

Audience 70 Reviews (previous model)

Test Loudspeakers

WHAT HI-FI? Awards Issue, September 1999
Dynaudio Audience 70, £1100

Sound: 5-stars
Build: 4-stars
Compat: 4-stars
Verdict: 5-stars

One look at the Audience 70s immediately confirms that Dynaudin has different priorities to the other speaker manufacturers featured in this group. There's no sign of the lovingly-finished real wood veneers and luxurious styling found elsewhere, just plain vinyl-clad cabinets.

However, build quality is good, the 90cm-tall boxes being solidly made and well-braced, and featuring top quality drive units and components. There are three drivers per speaker: a 28mm silk-dome tweeter, plus two 17cm polypropylene mid bass drivers, which work in parallel. However, there's no biwiring option here, Dynaudio feeling its products sound better single-wired.

A bit average so far then, but it's on sound quality that these speakers really score. They have a wonderfully dynamic delivery that brings music to life in a truly vivid manner. Mars from Holst's Planets Suite comes across with breathtaking power and scale — few speakers in this price range can match the Audience 70s when it comes to bringing a stirring piece like this to life.

Yet despite their energetic sound, the Dynaudios are just at home with subtler forms of music, too. Listen to the late Eva Cassidy's rendition of Curtis Mayfield's People Get Ready and the Audience 70s recreate her voice with finesse and presence, allowing the listener to pay close attention to her phrasing and technique.

Switching to music that demands attack and drive, and these Dynaudios are in their element punching out the powerful bassline from Monkey Mafia's Make Jab Music with great confidence.

So, as long as care is taken that their 87dB W m sensitivity and 4ohm impedance won't put a strain on your amp, the Audience 70s will howl you over with their thrilling performance.

Conclusion

Three designs stand out above the others in our big bucks group. The Jamo Concert 8s have long been a favorite of ours, being beautifully built and engineered, and delivering a superbly dynamic sound that majors on resolution. But the amazing Harbeth HL Compact 7ESs are better still. They're the priciest speakers here, but reward with one of the most natural and convincing performances we've heard at the price. Indeed, they're the best-sounding speakers in the group.

Yet for all that, top honours have to go to Dynaudio's unglamorous Audience 70s. They're certainly the rhythm kings of this group, and come very close to the Jamos and Harbeths in overall sonic excellence, yet at a significantly lower price. Looks can be deceptive...

WHAT HI-FI?, 1999 Buying Guide
Dynaudio Audience 70
Best Buy

We had our first encounter with Dynaudio's floorstanding Audience 70s in our February issue and were blown away by their powerful yet refined delivery. Seven months later we pitted them against sevesimilarly-priced rivals, and though the competition was tough (to say the least), they won the day.

For the 1,100 pounds, the 70s are nothing special to behold, their 94cm-tall cabinets being wrapped in wood-effect vinyl – not what you expect at this price. But the average cosmetics are compensated for by sturdy build and top-quality drive units, namely two 17cm polypropelene mid/bass units and a 28mm silk-dome tweeter.

Partnered with amplification that won't balk at the 4ohm impedance, the Audience 70s have the same dynamic freedom found elsewhere in the Audience range. That pair of 17cm drivers dishes up oodles of wonderfully deep, solid bass which gives rhythm real drive, and add to that a punchy midrange and clear treble, and these speakers are able to bring any recording to life with power, finesse and presence. In fact. the 70s are so good they outperform speakers costing hundreds of pounds more.



More Dynamite from Dynaudio

Review reprinted with permission from **February 1999 - WHAT HI FI?**

We couldn't wait to get our hands on the Dynaudio Audience 70s, as other models in the range have collected a fair amount of praise from us over recent months. And yet first impressions are mixed: While build quality is good, the 90x20.5x25.5cm (h x w x d) cabinets being neatly made and solidly braced, vinyl covering on £1100 speakers is tacky considering real wood veneers are common at £300.

Fortunately, the quality of drive units is good, with lower frequencies handled by two 17cm polypropylene units working in parallel, and treble by a 28mm silk dome unit. Biwiring isn't an option - the company feels singlewiring gives better results.

Sensitivity is 87dB/W/m with 4ohm impedance. Though this may seem tricky, most amps should Cope, as the load remains relatively constant.

Sonically, these speakers have the same sense of dynamic freedom as their smaller siblings, though there's now a wonderfully solid, deep bass performance -Doo Wop (That thing) by Lauryn Hill Sounds excellent, with the speakers producing natural, tight, punchy basslines and impeccably pitched notes. The positive story continues with higher frequencies, the midrange being nicely layered while treble is powerful and clear. These speakers don't hold back, yet they're refined enough not to sound fatiguing. Change to something classical, Such as Pachelbel's Canon, and the '70s show superb sophistication, with finely judged tonal balance as well as great soundstaging and focus.

We like the Audience '70s a great deal and in terms of sonics there's very little to criticize, even at this price.

Dynaudio Audience 70 Loudspeakers £1100 For: Dynamics, openness, subtlety and excellent bass; slimline cabinets
Against: Vinyl covers rather than real wood veneers Verdict: If you don't mind the vinyl finish buy with confidence.