



Fire starter

PMC's most affordable home speaker is a condensed version of everything it feels is important. **Ed Selley** rather likes it

DETAILS

PRODUCT
PMC prodigy1

ORIGIN
UK

TYPE
2-way standmount loudspeaker

WEIGHT
4.5kg each

DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
165 x 320 x 237mm

FEATURES

- 27mm soft dome tweeter with integral grille
- 133mm natural fibre mid/bass driver
- Claimed sensitivity: 87.5dB/1W/1M (6ohm)

DISTRIBUTOR
PMC Speakers

WEBSITE
pmc-speakers.com

You hardly need reminding that inflation has been a big deal of late. The price of pretty much everything has crept relentlessly up and this has in turn had implications for audio brands. Where PMC once contested the £1,000 point with its entry range, the price of the 25 21i has risen to over £2,000, leaving an entire segment where it is no longer present. As purchases here can often see customers stick with the company they choose for future updates, this matters and the prodigy range has been created to fill this gap. Crucially, the prodigy1 embodies all the engineering principles PMC holds dear in its more expensive models. It's built around a 6-foot-long transmission line that winds its way through the cabinet; displacing the crossover to a location behind the tweeter, before curving back underneath and exiting under the mid/bass driver. It does so via a Laminair type port.

The drivers are different from those in the twenty5i models, but are used in

Weight and presence are good, but it's the speed that's more impressive still

other PMC speakers. The tweeter is a 27mm soft dome type also used in the result6 active nearfield monitor, but tweaked for operation in a passive speaker and to run a lower crossover of 1.7kHz (much the same as the 25i models). This is fitted with a grille which helps with dispersion and protects the dome; useful because grilles are a £100 option (although of a similar quality to the ones you'll find further up the range).

The mid/bass driver is taken from the Ci range of on-wall speakers and is a 133mm natural fibre cone with a long

throw and inverted cap. The Ci models also use transmission lines so the process of transplanting them into the prodigy1 is not one of wild experimentation. The output of the two drivers together is a claimed frequency response of 50Hz-25kHz at the more rigorous +/-3dB figure. You can buy standmounts at this sort of price that have a lower frequency response than this, but out-and-out low-end is only half the story as to why PMC uses them.

Taking drivers from two different product lines and ensuring that they work well together places a serious load on the crossover and this seems to have been where a significant amount of development time has been expended. Brief experiments with minimalist designs were unsuccessful (and even if they had worked, it would have resulted in a speaker that was different to every other PMC model), but the existing design was too expensive to employ. The result is a halfway house that accepts a 12dB per octave slope and uses components selected on a tighter budget to give a close listening experience to more expensive models.

The cabinet is also simplified. Gone are the non-parallel edges and wood veneer as in their place comes a conventional flat-sided cabinet with a black sheen. When I saw the launch photos for the prodigy1 I was concerned that the result was going to look a little austere, but having spent some time with it I think PMC has done a rather good job. It feels simpler and more functional than its pricier brethren, but still comes across as very well made and attractive on its own terms. I think that the more conventional cabinet is less visually challenging and integrates the laminair port well. There is no inhouse stand for the prodigy range, but PMC has partnered with Custom Design to produce a suitable one for £250 unfilled or £290 mass-loaded and a pair is duly supplied for testing.

Sound quality

PMC quotes a relatively benign 87.5dB sensitivity for the prodigy1, so I kick off testing with Mission's 778X (HFC 507) integrated. With 45W to hand it isn't volcanically powerful, but there is enough to run the PMC at any vaguely domestically acceptable level. It takes very little time to establish the character and benefits of PMC's transmission line has survived the move to this lower price point. You can buy speakers at this price that have more bass than this, but that's only half the story. The manner in which the prodigy adds weight and presence from the lower midrange down is noteworthy, but it's the speed



HOW IT COMPARES

Compared with the KEF LS50 Meta (HFC 508), the prodigy1 is forced to concede that it cannot match the KEF's formidable low end. The LS50 Meta is also easier to place and produces an exceptional stereo image. From there, though, the prodigy1 begins to stage a fight back. The prodigy1 is tonally sweeter, more forgiving and frequently more fun than the KEF and, while neither is a quick fix for an under performing budget amp, the PMC is significantly easier to drive. Both offer a taste of their maker's more expensive models, but the PMC is perhaps the easier speaker to exploit.



The prodigy1 is just as comfortable in a more professional studio environment

with which it does so that's more impressive still.

It handles Christine & The Queens' *Chris* in a way that ticks all the boxes. The deep low end that punctuates *Goya Soda!* is utterly convincing and underpins Helouise Lettissier's stunning vocal turn without impinging on her at any stage. There is a little work required with positioning to get the PMC to image truly effectively, but this is well covered in the documentation and, while the speaker does its best work a little way out from walls, the presence of that front port means it tolerates boundaries impressively well.

Impressive though the performance is via the Mission, a run on the end of a Naim Supernait 3 (HFC 456) demonstrates the prodigy1 has more to give if more talented electronics are employed. The word that appears a few times in my notes is 'grip'. The Naim is able to firm up that already impressive low end and give the PMC real bite and attack when needed. This isn't the preserve of big, thumping slabs of electronica either. The title track on Public Service Broadcasting's live orchestral *This New Noise* has the scale and mass needed to sound as convincing as it should. It isn't necessary to use an amp as expensive as the Naim to achieve these benefits either. Some testing on the end of a NAD C 3050 – which is more price commensurate – sees this all-important grip maintained in the performance.

Something it has inherited from the twenty5i models – and if anything, build on – is that it is forgiving of less-than-stellar mastering. PMC has built a reputation as a manufacturer of monitor speakers so the prodigy is pretty much obliged to point out the limitations in material, but it does so in an almost apologetic way. This is not a

device that will put half your collection off limits while flattering the other half, but the really clever bit is it really does shine with excellent recordings. The sublime *Blue Heron Suite* by Sarah Jarosz is delivered in a way that makes you forget about the nature of the 'replay chain' and simply focus on the music itself. You can then change tack and play Acid Arab's *Trois* as loud as you dare and the experience is impressively visceral.

Conclusion

The single most important thing the prodigy1 does is embody the qualities of the rest of the PMC range. If you like what it does, more concentrated doses are available as you head up the series – which means the prodigy1 has succeeded in its most important aim. More than this, though, it is one of the most spacious and authoritative standmounts available anywhere near the price and something that will drop into a wide selection of systems and do justice to them. Inflation is a depressing business, but PMC has shown that you don't have to simply sit back and accept it ●

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY ★★★★★	LIKE: Potent, open and engaging sound; build; impressively forgiving
VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★	DISLIKE: Won't flatter less capable kit; needs care with placement
BUILD QUALITY ★★★★★	WE SAY: A superb introduction to PMC's values and a seriously capable arrival at the price point
EASE OF DRIVE ★★★★★	

OVERALL
★★★★★