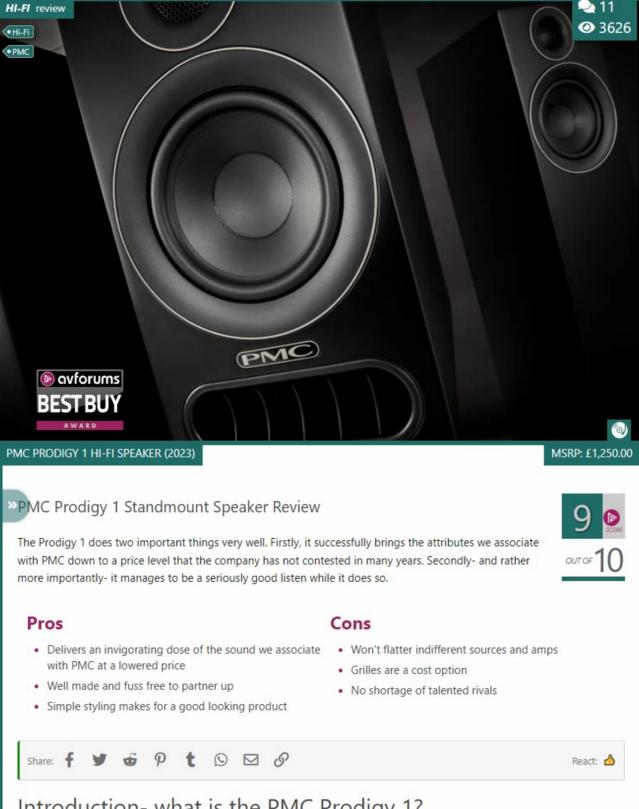


PMC Prodigy 1 Standmount Speaker Review

The PMC Experience

by Ed Selley Thursday at 9:22 AM

Review Specs Discussion (11)



PMC PRODIGY 1 HI-FI SPEAKER (2023) MSRP: £1,250.00

PMC Prodigy 1 Standmount Speaker Review

9 OUT OF 10 SCORE

The Prodigy 1 does two important things very well. Firstly, it successfully brings the attributes we associate with PMC down to a price level that the company has not contested in many years. Secondly- and rather more importantly- it manages to be a seriously good listen while it does so.

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| <p>Pros</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivers an invigorating dose of the sound we associate with PMC at a lowered price Well made and fuss free to partner up Simple styling makes for a good looking product | <p>Cons</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Won't flatter indifferent sources and amps Grilles are a cost option No shortage of talented rivals |
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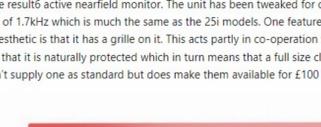
Introduction- what is the PMC Prodigy 1?

The PMC Prodigy 1 is a two way standmount loudspeaker. It follows a configuration very similar to many other PMC speakers we have covered over the years but there is one very crucial difference. The Prodigy 1 arrives on the market costing £1,250. This is a reduction of over a grand in comparison to the existing 25 21i that was previously the most affordable domestic PMC speaker. This brings the Prodigy 1 into a price point that PMC has not competed in for a number of years and makes their ideas available to a whole new audience.

This is welcome but not without risk. It's a good thing to make sure that the first rung of your product range exists at a point where it's a serious proposition for people but if you do that while sacrificing all the things you are known for while you do it, the penalties can be severe. PMC is adamant that the Prodigy 1 is a proper PMC; built to the standards that they expect and incorporating the same features as the more expensive models. The idea is simple; if you like the Prodigy 1, the rest of the PMC range will give you ever greater hits of the good stuff until you've bought a pair of Fenestrias and there's an unsightly scar where one of your kidneys used to be.

That's the idea anyway. In practise, the Prodigy 1 not only has to be the embodiment of PMC ethos at a much lower price, that much lower price puts it up against some exceptional speakers, incorporating differing design priorities and capable of sparkling performance in their own right. Can this baby PMC take the fight to them to win you over to PMC in the first place? Is it really able to do the things that PMCs are associated with at such a price reduction? Can I write this review without packing it full of stupid Prodigy references? We had best find out.

Specification and Design



If you talk about PMC to people who have a passing knowledge of speakers, the one thing they will generally associate with the company is a transmission line. It's omnipresent in the company's products and it's the one thing that ties everything together in the inventory. Put simply, if the Prodigy didn't have one, it would be questionable as to how much of a PMC it really was. As PMC had no plans for an existential crisis in the development of the Prodigy, it is equipped with a transmission line.

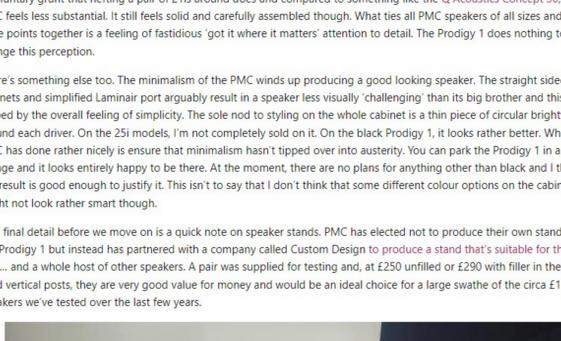
This transmission line is no less than a 6 foot 3 inches long and occupies a considerable amount of the internal volume of the cabinet. It actually displaces the crossover to a location roughly behind the tweeter. The shape is a oxbow when viewed from the side and it terminates in a slightly simplified version of the company's Laminair port system which is a genuinely clever piece of air management that helps with the control of air exiting the cabinet via the transmission line. These two elements are integral to the offering PMC is making with the Prodigy 1; it does what the big ones do.

The drivers are also devices that have previous PMC pedigree too. The units used in the 25i models cannot make the trip down to this price point but PMC has other product lines that have drivers that work. The tweeter is a 27mm soft dome device that is also used in the result6 active nearfield monitor. The unit has been tweaked for operation in a passive speaker and to run a lower crossover of 1.7kHz which is much the same as the 25i models. One feature of this tweeter which sits between performative and aesthetic is that it has a grille on it. This acts partly in co-operation with the waveguide to direct the output but it also means that it is naturally protected which in turn means that a full size cloth grille isn't automatically needed. As such, PMC doesn't supply one as standard but does make them available for £100 if you want a set.



The mid bass driver is taken from the company's range of Ci drivers that are on wall models designed for a variety of applications. It's a 130mm natural fibre cone with a long throw and inverted cap. Crucially, the Ci models also use transmission lines so they are set up to work as PMC wants them to in the Prodigy 1. The output of the two drivers together is a claimed frequency response of 50Hz-25kHz at the more rigorous +/-3dB figure. There are standmounts that naturally offer more low end welly than this at similar money but out and out bass extension is only half the story with PMC's use of transmission lines. It's a competitive set of numbers though.

Absolutely key to making two drivers from different ranges work together is the crossover and this seems to have been the area where the development of the Prodigy models took the most time. The reduction in overall cost meant that the crossovers used in the more expensive models can't be budgeted for here. Equally, experiments with minimalist crossovers (not an area that PMC has generally tinkered with before) did not yield results the company wanted to pursue. The final result is an evolved version of the the 25i crossover that accepts a 12dB per octave slope (by comparison, the 25 21i has a 24dB per octave slope) and that uses components selected on a tighter budget to give as close a listening experience to the more expensive models.



All this is placed inside a cabinet that dispenses with the non-parallel edges of the 25i models and simplifies aspects of the construction internally, as well as omitting the wood veneer. Lifting the Prodigy 1 out of the box doesn't generate the involuntary grunt that hefting a pair of 21is around does and compared to something like the Q Acoustics Concept 30, the PMC feels less substantial. It still feels solid and carefully assembled though. What ties all PMC speakers of all sizes and price points together is a feeling of fastidious 'got it where it matters' attention to detail. The Prodigy 1 does nothing to change this perception.

There's something else too. The minimalism of the PMC winds up producing a good looking speaker. The straight sided cabinets and simplified Laminair port arguably result in a speaker less visually 'challenging' than its big brother and this is helped by the overall feeling of simplicity. The sole nod to styling on the whole cabinet is a thin piece of circular brightwork around each driver. On the 25i models, I'm not completely sold on it. On the black Prodigy 1, it looks rather better. What PMC has done rather nicely is ensure that minimalism hasn't tipped over into austerity. You can park the Prodigy 1 in a lounge and it looks entirely happy to be there. At the moment, there are no plans for anything other than black and I think the result is good enough to justify it. This isn't to say that I don't think that some different colour options on the cabinet might not look rather smart though.

One final detail before we move on is a quick note on speaker stand design. PMC has elected not to produce their own stand for the Prodigy 1 but instead has partnered with a company called Custom Design to produce a stand that's suitable for the task... and a whole host of other speakers. A pair was supplied for testing and, at £250 unfilled or £290 with filler in the two solid vertical posts, they are very good value for money and would be an ideal choice for a large swathe of the circa £1k speakers we've tested over the last few years.



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How was the Prodigy 1 tested?

The PMC has been run on the end of a Cambridge Audio Edge A, taking a feed from a Chord Electronics Hugo Mscaler and Vertec MG-1 MkII into a Cyrus Phono Signature to get a handle on absolute performance. It has then spend varying amounts of time running with the Mission 778x, NAD 3050 and Naim Supernait 3 and a medley of digital sources to get a better contextual view on their abilities. Material used has been FLAC, AIFF, DSD, Tidal Qobuz and vinyl.

Performance



When a manufacturer (and this is not simply a hifi thing; it's applicable across multiple product categories) decides to produce a new product that enters the market at a significantly lower price than what they have been doing up to that point, it lives or dies on how much of the basic ethos of the company makes itself felt at this new price. It has to be said, that the audio industry is actually rather good at doing this and I've tested a number of devices over the years that achieve this nicely. Even judged by these high standards though, the Prodigy 1 is outstanding at being a PMC.

First, the housekeeping. The setup of the PMC is entirely in keeping with other standmounts from the range. A little care is needed in terms of positioning and setup; the company is not and never has been about plonk and play, but once you've put a modicum of effort in, the Prodigy 1 does a wonderful job of 'phasing out' of the stereo image that it creates. Like other members of the family, this is also not the speaker you should be looking towards if the amount of power you have to hand is in the single figures. It's not as tricky as the 87.5dB/w sensitivity and six ohm impedance might suggest but it does need some power to shine.

But, be under no illusion it does shine and it shines like a PMC. At the core of this is that transmission line and the effect it has on the overall performance. Its role is not to give the PMC 'more' bass than rivals; it cannot compete against the truly biblical low end that the KEF LS50 Meta can deliver for example but it does change the character of how the PMC goes about producing low end. The effect is an uncanny combination of heft that really shouldn't come from a 130mm driver but through this less than stellar master and keep it listenable.



This means that the Prodigy 1 tears its way into *Need Some Mo'* by Ko Ko Mo with an agility and out and out vibrancy that is simply joyous. The kick drum has the brisk, high speed thwack that turns it from 'a bit of the low end' into a living, breathing piece of percussion that's an integral part of the track. The PMC has a simple desire to get up and go that is temperamentally closer to the Neat Petite Classic than most things nearer a grand and it retains this almost independently of electronics.

The clever part of this is that the urgency is never relentless or wearing. The PMC will batter its way through *Conga Fury* by Juno Reactor with every last ounce of fury intact before veering wildly across to *Privatizing* by Mark Knopfler and letting its almost loping time signature flow without any feeling of it being forced. Simply put, this is a speaker that is effortlessly rhythmic and ready to have a crack at anything you throw at it.

The tonal realism that the PMC delivers at the same has to be seen as being right at the top of the class at this price point. Voices and instruments are consistently well delivered and the PMC is usefully even from top to bottom and commendably spacious while it does so. Listening to *Dionysus* by Deaf Car Dance and comparing the PMC to pricier speakers here, you can argue that the midrange it delivers isn't quite as full and it will lose out as the amount of information increases, the PMC cannot deliver all of it but that's a comparison being made against speakers that do cost a fair bit more.



There's something else too... It's been a long time since the 21i was here on test but I think that the Prodigy 1 is actually a little sweeter and more forgiving in presentation terms. You can listen to the mangled digital master of *Muse's Black Holes and Revelations* on the Prodigy 1 and the experience is actually pretty enjoyable. Sure, the more expensive speaker is more detailed and more accurate than the Prodigy 1 but, without ever feeling inaccurate, the little speaker is able to plough through this less than stellar master and keep it listenable.

Some PMC traits do remain though. You can power the Prodigy 1 off the Mission 778x, indeed doing so is rather enjoyable. Ultimately though, this is speaker from a monitoring company and it will behave as such. The NAD 3050 extracts more from the PMC and both the Supernait 3 and Edge A yield still more from it. I don't believe you need to spend a huge amount more than the Prodigy 1 costs to get great results from it and it needs (a lot) less power than the LS50 Meta but it's not a sonic band aid for an underperforming system- it'll simply do a good job of telling you what's wrong with it. I do suspect that a combination of Rega Elex Mk4 and Prodigy 1 would be a delight though.

Conclusion

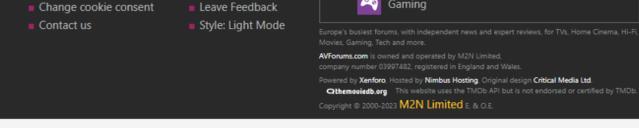
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During the listening phase for the Prodigy 1, the device it consistently reminded me of- and you'll need to bear with me on this one- is the Chords Mojo2. This is because, the two devices do exactly the thing; they embody in miniature, everything that the company seek to do with their larger products. A Mojo2 owner can listen to a DAVE and see the link between the two and in just the same way, the Prodigy exhibits the same fundamental ethos as its big brothers. If you like what it does, more of the same but better is available further up the food chain.

The thing is though, I don't think people will rush to chop their Prodigy 1s in. This is an excellent new arrival at the price; able to deliver rhythm and joy without compromising on a more than respectable dose of reality with it. There's no shortage of supremely talented rivals but the PMC arrives able to mix it with all of them and the result is a speaker that is an unquestionable Best Buy.



Scores



9 OUT OF 10 SCORE

Our Review Ethos

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Review Specs Discussion (11)