

## REVIEW PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

# PMC Prodigy 5

All the heritage, technology and performance of its maker's established designs, but in an even more cost-effective package, makes PMC's new arrival an audio bargain

The question many speaker companies seem to be asking themselves at the moment is simple, but rather troubling: 'So what do we do now?' The problem is that the loudspeaker market is, almost by definition, one of mature technology, to the extent that many manufacturers fall into the trap of making many ranges of models one has to examine very closely to tell apart.

One solution at the moment seems to be to throw caution to the wind and make 'statement' products aimed at the extremely well-heeled, but doing things the predictable way has never been a guiding principle at British speaker manufacturer PMC: with a long-standing heritage in studio loudspeakers – it is the Professional Monitor Company, after all – the company has built its success in the domestic market on leveraging the same technology found in its pro-use speakers into more home-friendly designs such as its current twenty5i and fact models. However, even the most affordable domestic models will set you back £2395 a pair for the twenty5.2i standmount model and £4295/pr for the compact twenty5.23i floorstanders.

Every unit built is measured and listened to against reference units, and then listened to again as a pair before dispatch

It's not that those speakers aren't extremely good value for money, given the performance they offer, but of late the PMC team has been working on a way of bringing its technology, found in recording and mastering studios worldwide, to an even wider audience, and the result is the new Prodigy line, unveiled at May's High End Show in Munich. It comprises just two models, the little Prodigy 1 standmount/bookshelf speaker and the Prodigy 5 floorstander, and the good news for those who've always looked at the brand with interest but considered it just too much of a stretch is the pricing: the two models sell for £1295/pr and £1995/pr respectively.

Yes, there are some obvious signs of economies being made, but they're merely cosmetic and don't detract in any way



### PMC PRODIGY 5

**Type** Two-way floorstanding speakers  
**Drive units** 27mm soft-dome tweeter, 13.3cm fibre-cone mid/bass  
**Sensitivity** 87.5dB/W/m  
**Nominal impedance** 6ohms  
**Recommended amplifier power** 20-250W  
**Max SPL** 124dB  
**Frequency response** 25Hz-25kHz (-3dB)  
**Finish** Silk black  
**Accessories supplied** Plinth bars with spikes and spike shoes; grilles £99 option  
**Dimensions** (with spikes and plinth bars, HxWxD) 92.5x23.3x23.7cm  
**pmc-speakers.com**

from the speakers: there's only one finish rather than the choice of colours and wood veneers you'll find in the twenty5i series, but it's an especially high-quality matt black silk paint, giving the speakers a purposeful look. And when it comes to speaker grilles, the company has reasoned that many of us never use them, so they're optional, at £99 a pair, while there's no dedicated speaker stand offering for the Prodigy, as there's no shortage of suitable 60cm/24in supports available from third-party suppliers.

Beyond that, the speakers are very much pure PMC, not PMC-lite, and whichever model you choose are capable of performance that's not so much surprising, but startling. This review mainly concerns itself with the larger Prodigy 5, but I had the opportunity to listen to both pairs at PMC HQ in Bedfordshire before the review sample was delivered to me, and must admit I came away awaiting the courier's knock on the front door with real anticipation.

Both models use the same compliment of drivers: a 27mm soft-dome tweeter and a 13.3cm mid/bass unit with a natural fibre cone, both designed and made in-house, and tried and tested in the company's pro-use speaker designs. And within each has a similar-length version of the company's folded Advanced Transmission Line bass-tuning system, designed to take the output from the rear of the mid/bass unit and deliver it in-phase via the vent(s) at the bottom of the speakers' front panel.

There's one vent on the Prodigy 1, and two on the Prodigy 5 we have here, and they use the company's Laminair technology, derived from Formula 1 aerodynamics, to smooth the airflow. PMC says it doesn't just engineer components; it engineers air, too.

Close attention has also been paid to the design of the crossover in the speakers, PMC explaining that all the components here are matched, if not quite as tightly as in the company's pricier models: they're still chosen on performance as well as measurement, but the design has been optimised to allow just a little more tolerance. Nonetheless, the same procedures apply here as to all PMC's models: the speakers are still built in-house, here in the UK, and every unit built is

### SUGGESTED PARTNERS

The Prodigy 5 is an exceptional design: these systems will bring out the best in the speakers

#### CAMBRIDGE AUDIO EVO 150

For all-in-one convenience, the Cambridge Audio Evo 150 system will work exceptionally well with the Prodigy 5



#### NAIM NSC 222 PREAMP/STREAMER

Used with the NAP 250 power amplifier, Naim's NSC 222 preamp/streamer will unleash all the capabilities of the PMC speakers



measured and listened to against reference units, and then listened to again as a pair before dispatch.

### PERFORMANCE

The Prodigy 5 is created with room-friendliness in mind, too: it's designed for wide dispersion to extend the listening sweet-spot, and that ATL bass tuning is less dependent on, or prone to, boundary effects, making the speakers easier to place. Neither are they power hungry, thanks to 87.3dB/W/m sensitivity and 6ohm nominal impedance: they'll work well with amplifiers delivering as little as 20W but, as I discovered during my listening, will also 'grow' impressively as the amp quality and output is increased.

Little plinth bars bolt into the base of the speakers to aid stability, with spikes and shoes supplied, and a single set of terminals accept the cables from the amplifier. And

with a slight toe-in towards the listening position, the speakers immediately impressed not only with the sheer weight and low-end grip they delivered with the Le Concert des Nations/Jordi Savall recording of Mozart's Requiem on Alia Vox (07/23), but also with the free-breathing sense of space and fine detail on offer. Even with a very modest Cambridge Audio integrated amplifier I had to hand, with just 35W per channel on offer, the Prodigy 5 sounded big and dramatic with the 'Dies Irae', as indeed with the thundering organ arrangement of Britten's 'Storm' interlude from *Peter Grimes* on Anna Lapwood's 'Images' album (11/21), and upping the ante to my elderly Marantz MA-23 monobloc amps, good for 50W apiece, saw the PMCs lapping up the extra power and grip on offer.

Even more felicitous was the pairing of the speakers with the latest Naim

NCS 222 streaming preamplifier and NAP 250 power amplifier, the £2000 speakers being by no means outclassed by the nigh-on £12,000 of Salisbury-built electronics driving them. With the wonderfully crisp and spacious Channel Classics recording of Rachel Podger and Kristian Bezuidenhout in CPE Bach sonatas for violin and keyboard, the Naim/PMC pairing sounded at once beautifully focused and controlled, and so easy to listen to. The designers' mantra of 'avoiding distortion like the plague' fulfils the speakers' intention to 'bring the studio home', the Prodigy 5 delivering a sound every bit as revealing and pleasing as many a pricier design I have encountered.

As I said, they're far from 'PMC-lite': these are very accomplished speakers, both room- and system-friendly, and remarkable value for money. **G**

## Or you could try ...

**The Prodigy 5 enters a competitive market, though it has on its side a big, rich highly detailed sound from an exceptionally compact enclosure. Here are some alternatives**

#### Focal Vestia No 2 speaker

Focal's Vestia No 2 speaker takes a different approach, with multiple drivers to deliver the scale, using the company's Slatefiber cone material for the

midrange and bass drivers, and an inverted dome tweeter. But they're quite a bulky design, standing over a metre tall complete with their tilted plinth stand. Find out more at [focal.com](http://focal.com)



#### Spendor A2

Spendor keeps things really compact with its A2, the smallest floorstanding model in its A-Line series. It's just over 75cm tall and a mere 15cm wide, and follows the same two-way path as the PMC speaker, with a 22mm polyamide dome for the treble and a 15cm polymer-cone mid/

bass driver. Apart from the sound, which is clear and open, a major attraction here is the availability of a choice of real wood veneer finishes, as you can discover at [spendoraudio.com](http://spendoraudio.com)

#### Q Acoustics Concept 50

There's a lot going on inside the Q Acoustics Concept 50, from drivers integrated into the structure of the speaker to an enclosure using a twin-wall design with damping gel in the 'sandwich' – but it's all there to keep the cabinet as quiet as possible, letting the quality of the drive-units shine through. The elegant design comes in a choice of black, silver or white, and comes complete with stylish stabilising feet. See more at [qacoustics.co.uk](http://qacoustics.co.uk)