

# KC

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JANUARY 2005 \$3.50



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## Speaking of design: Speakers attractive enough to earn wall space

Home theaters bring the best of the entertainment world right into your home. They can enhance the special effects of the latest blockbuster movie or bring out the triumphant sounds of your favorite concerto so vividly you would swear your living room was playing host to an entire orchestra. But the downside to having an extensive home theater is the large, clunky equipment required. In fact, home theaters were on their way to becoming the interior designer's archenemy. But nowadays, consumer electronics companies are taking elements of home decor into consideration when designing their products.

In fact, the new Monitor Series on-wall speakers from Paradigm are meant to be seen as well as heard. They come in many shapes and sizes, complement a wall-mounted plasma or LCD television screen nicely, provide a diffuse soundfield and have accurate timbre to blend with the sound output of a multiple-speaker system. Sound FX, 4451 Belleview Ave., carries Paradigm speakers retailing from \$129-\$900.

Sound FX also carries Wharfedale brand speakers, which features the unique LoudPanel model. This "heard but not seen" speaker is hidden from view inside hanging picture panels. LoudPanel works like a piano soundboard, with sound coming from the entire surface of the panel rather than one specific point. This creates more ambient and less directional sound and makes this model perfect for "sweetspot" listening areas or strangely-shaped rooms.

There are many factors to consider when purchasing a speaker system. When it comes to in-wall models, the speaker's placement is extremely important. "You can put a \$10,000 speaker system in your home, but if the walls have poor acoustic attributes they're not going to sound good. You won't be getting the quality you paid for," said J.C. Cirese, sales representative at Sound FX. It's always your best bet

to employ the services of the retailer from whom you purchased your system. Specialty stores like Sound FX ensure top-quality from their products by offering precision engineering and speaker calibration of all their lines.

And if you're looking for the most bang for your buck, look no further than a little company from Lawrence, Kansas that's making a lot of noise. MartinLogan has just designed one of the most innovative lines of in-wall speakers to date. The flagship model, the Voyage (\$1,995 each) is a 200-watt speaker, weighs 25.5 pounds and projects less than two inches from the wall surface. A smaller model, the

Passage, is a 150-watt speaker, weighs 16 pounds and, just like the Voyage, features the unprecedentedly precise ATF (Advanced thin film) driver technology. This allows for the uncanny sound staging and eye-popping dynamics upon which MartinLogan has built its reputation. These long, sleek speakers give off a cool confidence in their design, coming standard in a silver finish that complements either warm or cool shades of walls. The Voyage also features paintable end-caps and a selection of grill cover kits (\$55 per speaker).



Audioport, Ltd., 7329 W. 97th St., is the exclusive retailer of MartinLogan speakers in the Kansas City metro area. "MartinLogan always offers quality unique products," according to owner Rick Milam. Milam agrees with Cirese that having an in-wall system that sounds good is challenging, but believes that MartinLogan's new line is quite reliable. "I'm going to put a pair in my home," Milam said, an impressive testimony to the manufacturer's quality.

Whichever speaker system you choose to complement your home theater, be sure to consult an installation expert to ensure quality performance. ■

BY BRANDI WILLS

ABOVE: When a speaker is as handsome as the Voyage from MartinLogan, it's worthy of a place on your wall.