

## Paradigm Studio 40 mk2

### A must-hear stand-mount

By Michael Jones

#### Paradigm Studio 40 mk2. \$2199

"Speakers like that don't sell any more, Michael." I was describing the Studio 40 to a friend who is also a hi-fi retailer when that comment emerged.

He was right, in a way; speakers like the Paradigm 40 don't sell very well these days. Large bookshelf speakers, particularly taller bookshelf speakers requiring a shorter stand, are distinctly unfashionable. Instead, what sells are smaller bookshelf speakers (the smaller and more "invisible" the better) or slim floorstanders.

But listen to the Studio 40s for a few minutes and you'll quickly forget fashion. This Paradigm is a wonderfully sophisticated loudspeaker, which will appeal greatly to the musically astute listener.

#### Mr Natural

Zander's superb Mahler 5 on Telarc is accompanied by a second CD with conductor Zander explaining the symphony with various musical examples. Immediately I'm struck by

the naturalness of Zander's voice, without any chesty boom or extra sibilance. The musical examples on this second disc, whether Zander

on his piano or extracts from various recordings, were also well portrayed.

The first disc, of course, contains Zander's performance of the symphony. It's a hard work to reproduce well, but one within the compass of the Paradigm.

This work contains wide-ranging dynamics, including sections where Mahler wanted the musicians to play as loud as possible. A speaker needs to be good to reproduce this without turning harsh; the Studio 40 managed this without any apparent effort. Keeping the lower level details of the music in focus while all hell was breaking loose is something that the Studio 40 did well. Lesser equipment (speakers, amps, CD players) can "defocus", painting only in broad brushstrokes

#### I can't see nobody

Within the Paradigm Studio 40 are three drivers. The 165mm mica-polymer mid/woofer, coloured a dirty yellow, is augmented below 400Hz with a similarly sized polypropylene cone. Both units are built on a cast chassis, instead of the more familiar (and cheaper) pressed chassis, with 38mm voice coils.

Coming in a surprisingly low 1500Hz is a 25mm aluminium dome tweeter. Normally a tweeter starts at a much higher 2.5kHz-3.5kHz, which places a lot less strain on the driver. By crossing over so low, the Paradigm tweeter needs to be quite a heroic transducer.

But this does have advantages. The lower crossover will enhance a consistently even dispersion of sound. Indeed, the sound of the Studio 40 remained consistent around my lounge.

When you stand up in front of most speakers, there is normally a big dip in the sound around 3kHz, the crossover frequency. There was very little change with the Studio 40. Plus horizontal dispersion was very consistent, which means that I could sit anywhere in my lounge with very little change to the sound.

The Studio 40 has two reflex ports on the back panel for bass loading. Below them are bi-wiring terminals for connecting to the amplifier.

These speakers are heavy! Their 12kg each weight suggests solid cabinets and extensive bracing. The Paradigms had a low amount of "cabinet talk", suggesting a clean sound.

My use of the Studio 40s was mainly on the end of my Plinius 8150, fed from a Meridian 508, along with some radio from my aging (but still very good!) NAD 4300 tuner.

#### The singer sang his song

I've been listening to Chris Isaak's *Wicked Game* CD a bit lately, particularly since reading an interesting article on how the title track was recorded. As with many studio recordings, the track is very much a studio assembly job, rather than a "natural" recording.

I often find that the better the



equipment, the more of the studio trickery I'm able to hear. For example, studio created rock music relies heavily on reverb, either from echo chambers or electronic back boxes (these days it's more likely to be algorithms in silicon). On *Wicked Game*, as with other tracks on this CD, I could hear far into the various types of reverb used.

#### Saw a new morning

To say I am impressed with the Paradigm Studio 40 mk2 is an understatement. I think that this is a magnificent loudspeaker and something of a bargain.

I suspect that it will appeal to the more experienced listener, as the Studio 40 is a speaker that gradually makes its skills and capabilities known, rather than knock you over the head and shout "listen to me!"

Warmly recommended.

To say I am impressed with the Paradigm Studio 40 mk2 is an understatement.

