

Harbeth

P3ESR

JOHN ATKINSON LOUDSPEAKER



DESCRIPTION Two-way, sealed-cabinet, stand-mounted loudspeaker. Drive-units: 0.75" (19mm) magnetically shielded, aluminum-dome tweeter; 5" (110mm) magnetically shielded, Radial2-cone woofer. Frequency response: 75Hz–20kHz, ± 3 dB. Nominal impedance: 6 ohms ("easy to drive"). Sensitivity: 83.5dB/2.83V/m.

Recommended amplification: >15W. Power handling: 50W program.

DIMENSIONS 12" (306mm) H by 7.5" (189mm) W by 8" (202mm) D, including grille and terminals. Weight: 14 lbs (6.3kg).

FINISHES All real-wood veneers: Cherry, Black Ash; add \$200/pair for Rosewood, Maple, Eucalyptus.

SERIAL NUMBERS OF UNITS

REVIEWED 0472L & R.

PRICE \$2195/pair. Approximate number of dealers: 26.

MANUFACTURER Harbeth Audio Ltd., 3 Enterprise Park, Lindfield, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH16 2LH, England, UK. Tel: (44) 1444-484371.

Web: www.harbeth.co.uk.

US distributor: Fidelis AV, 14 E.

Broadway (Route 102), Derry, NH 03038. Tel: (603) 437-4769.

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Everyone wants something different from a loudspeaker. Some people value midrange neutrality above all, while others will sacrifice some of that accuracy to get extended lows or a speaker that will play immensely loud with only a few watts of power. Some want stereo imaging that is sufficiently delicate, stable, and accurate that the speakers open a transparent window on the recording's original performing space. Some will sacrifice all of the above to get a speaker whose "jump factor" can jerk zombies out of their stupor. And there are those who are prepared to lose just a little bit of everything in order to have a speaker that may not excel in any of these areas, but communicates what they want from their music in the most effective overall manner.

Ultimately, of course, and provided that you a) have very deep pockets and b) are prepared to reach to the very bottom of those pockets, you can have everything. But each of us who lives

in the real world of car payments, mortgages, and col-

lege-age children must decide what is most important to us. You can't, therefore, say that real-world speakers with more extended lows are inherently better than those that excel at soundstaging, or that both are inferior to those with zero midrange coloration. All that can be said is that one of those choices will fit your needs better than it fits others' needs. That's why so many companies offer so many different speaker models at so many prices.

Which brings me to Harbeth's P3ESR. At just 12" tall, this is not a speaker that will succeed at playing pipe-organ recordings. And with a single woofer just 5" in diameter, it's not going to play super-loud or fill large rooms with sound. But because the earlier versions of this sealed-box, two-way minimonitor excelled at reproducing the all-important midrange, and were champs at re-creating a believable soundstage, I have patiently awaited review samples ever since I auditioned an early prototype at the 2009 Consumer Electronics Show.

The original HL-P3 was designed by Harbeth's Alan Shaw to replace the venerable BBC LS3/5A location monitor, of which Harbeth had been a licensee. (For the full history of this classic design, see www.stereophile.com/standloudspeakers/361.) I reviewed the HL-P3 in December 1993; John Marks enthused over the ES-2 version in the October 2005 installment of his column, "The Fifth Element," and I followed with a full review in April 2007. (You can find all this coverage, which includes the full backgrounds of both the design and Harbeth Audio Ltd., starting at www.stereophile.com/

