
Subject: Low Volume Speaker

Posted by [Skua](#) on Sat, 30 Mar 2013 01:01:17 GMT

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All

I have my heart set on building either a pair of 3pi or 4pi speakers, but I have one major requirement.

I currently live in an apartment where excessive volume is just not allowed. I currently have a pair of Cain and Cain 'Abbys' plus their corresponding 'Baily' sub-woofer which do not reach their full potential until I hit a volume level that is a little to much for the neighbors.

I have also gone the SET route and will be driving them with a 2a3, so efficiency is also a concern.

So my question is, which pi model '3' or '4' and corresponding drivers meet my main requirement of sounding good at low volumes (I do not plan to add any sub-woofers at this time)?

Thanks

Subject: Re: Low Volume Speaker

Posted by [steve f](#) on Sat, 30 Mar 2013 07:03:00 GMT

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I would go 3PI because as good as the JBL woofers are, they need some power to "come alive" and that means higher volume settings. The 3PI gives up a bit of sensitivity to play at lower frequency.

Wayne just changed the upgrade path so only he has experience there. I built a basic stock pair and they are very nice. Another possibility is 2Pi towers. You will get good efficiency, an easy load for a SET amp, and bass response that doesn't require flanking subs. The tradeoff, and it does make a difference, is that it's not a controlled directivity speaker. Things like room reflections will have a greater effect that PI3 mid horns will control.

My wife usually works from home telecommuting and uses the 3PI's for low volume background jazz listening. I hope this info helps.

Subject: Re: Low Volume Speaker

Posted by [Wayne Parham](#) on Sat, 30 Mar 2013 07:42:32 GMT

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Honestly, I am commuting these days and so I have a small stereo in my out-of-town apartment at

Sounds fantastic. Of course, I don't get the smoothing I'd get from blended flanking subs, but I don't have to worry about penetrating the complex with deep bass either. I find it to be very satisfying under these circumstances.

All of my larger loudspeaker models are voiced similarly, and really work best with subs, both for extension and modal smoothing. But they have deep enough bass response to be satisfying without subs too.

None of this takes away from what Steve said. He's right, and the shift in electro-mechanical characteristics between flea-power operation and even just ten watts makes a measureable difference. But it isn't like they are anemic sounding, even with just one watt. They still have strong, powerful sounding bass, especially compared with something like the Abbys.

Subject: Re: Low Volume Speaker
Posted by [Bill Epstein](#) on Sat, 30 Mar 2013 12:09:34 GMT
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Here's another vote for 4 Pis as ideal apartment-house speakers and I'm mainly feeding them 1.8 Watts. Most of my listening is 40s and 50s Jazz: Count Basie, Clifford Brown, Dizzy Gillespie, etc., and my Parafeed 45 amp delivers distinct, altho' diminished, low E-String tones and kick drum.

The 100 Watt solid state amp I recently added does things in terms of tight-fisted bass control and dynamics the 45 can't, but I can listen at average 85 dB levels with the 45 and not have the Rozzers at the door.

My 2Pis, with the 45, less so with the 8 Watt Pentode-in-Triode single-ended amp, has kinda sloppy bass which is fine for Batman, not so good for Diana Krall Live In Paris. The 100 Watt Adcom tho', really controls the bass and makes them great music speakers, too.

Subject: Re: Low Volume Speaker
Posted by [rkeman](#) on Sat, 30 Mar 2013 15:16:09 GMT
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The stock 3Pi is a fine loudspeaker at any volume level and can be used without subwoofers in most listening environments. Typical room gain allows extension to below 40Hz, resulting in a solid foundation for most music. Organ music, electronica and motion picture low frequency effects offer less impact than with good subwoofers in play, but such is life. Few listeners have experienced this good a speaker and most will never need a better speaker. The value is truly outstanding, especially in kit form.

The compression driver and midwoofer upgrades achieve performance that in most respects approaches state-of-the art. My thoughts on the previously recommended Acoustic Elegance TD12S midwoofer can be found in my 3Pi review (search the forum). Wayne can comment on the

newly offered Eminence Definimax 4012HO midwoofer, but it looks like an excellent driver based on the manufacturers literature.

Subject: Re: Low Volume Speaker
Posted by [Skua](#) on Sat, 30 Mar 2013 16:00:49 GMT
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Thanks for all the input.

Looks like either the '3pi' or '4pi' will meet my requirements, Have still not quite decided an which direction to go, but I am getting closer.

From some of the comments it looks like I may have better results using a little more power than that supplied by my 2a3 SET's. I have a very nice reconditioned Dynaco ST-70 that has just been setting around gathering dust (the 2a3's sounded better on my 'Abbys'). Would this be a better direction to go especially if I chose the 4pi with the JBL drivers or maybe the 3pi with the Eminence Definimax drivers (the ST-70 may not make a difference with my low volume requirement)?

Also what about using my single 'Baily' sub-woofer to help fill in some of the missing bass (again this will not help my neighbors at low volume).

These speakers are for listening to music only. I love my Chicago Blues and Female Vocalists.

Thanks

Subject: Re: Low Volume Speaker
Posted by [steve f](#) on Sat, 30 Mar 2013 21:56:52 GMT
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Whichever you choose, you absolutely can't lose. Please post your decision for the curious.

Steve

Subject: Re: Low Volume Speaker
Posted by [Skua](#) on Sun, 31 Mar 2013 04:03:08 GMT
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All

Ok made my decision, after carfull consultation with the MIS department (4 hours of begging and reminding her I have a birthday coming up) I am going with the 4pi and the JBL drivers and DE250's).

I will only be in this location for a couple of more years and someday I will be able to migrate the system into a more suitable location and then add some sub's.

I did have an internal debate with myself about the merits of getting the Eminence drivers initially and then doing an upgrade at a later date. My final decision is to build the cabinets now and by the time I am done I will have the extra dollars needed to purchase the upgraded drivers and a couple of crossover upgrades starting with the 15ga inductors, mill spec resistors and the Jantzen caps. I guess by now it would seem silly not to just go with the AuriCaps, but I have to watch my pennies somewhere.

Wayne, would it be possible to get a copy of the 4pi plans. Also is there any lead-time needed on ordering the 4pi kit and corresponding upgrades?

Thanks again for everyone's help and feedback.

Subject: Re: Low Volume Speaker
Posted by [Wayne Parham](#) on Sun, 31 Mar 2013 16:24:42 GMT
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You've got mail! I've sent you the plans.

We maintain inventory in stock for all our kits and upgrade drivers. However, we do build the crossovers to order, which takes a week to ten days. We have a few assembled crossovers in stock, but in general, you should expect we'll assemble your crossover at time of order. But like I said, we have everything in stock, so you'll get your kits pretty quickly.

Subject: Re: Low Volume Speaker
Posted by [Skua](#) on Thu, 11 Apr 2013 23:45:33 GMT
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Have lined-up a woodworking friend to help me make the '4pi' cabinets. We talked it over and decided to go ahead and also build a pair of 3pi subwoofers cabinets so that they will be ready to go when I decide to use them.

Wayne - would it be possible to also get a set of plans for the 3pi subwoofers.

Thanks
Herb

Subject: Re: Low Volume Speaker

Posted by [Wayne Parham](#) on Thu, 11 Apr 2013 23:58:28 GMT

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You've got mail!

Subject: Re: Low Volume Speaker

Posted by [Skua](#) on Fri, 12 Apr 2013 02:17:06 GMT

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Wayne

Thanks for the 3pi plans, but I was looking for the '3pi subwoofer' plans

Thanks

Herb

Subject: Re: Low Volume Speaker

Posted by [Wayne Parham](#) on Fri, 12 Apr 2013 04:22:45 GMT

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My mistake - I've re-sent.
