
Subject: 4 Pis at low volumes

Posted by [BrianG](#) on Wed, 23 Jan 2002 22:35:55 GMT

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In my experience, electrostatics loudspeakers are very clear at low volumes while dynamic loudspeakers require a fair degree of volume to convey a similar amount of information. How do 4 Pi speakers compare in this regard? Thanks, Brian

Subject: Re: 4 Pis at low volumes

Posted by [mikebake](#) on Thu, 24 Jan 2002 00:05:18 GMT

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"In my experience, electrostatics loudspeakers are very clear at low volumes while dynamic loudspeakers require a fair degree of volume to convey a similar amount of information." Well, maybe cheaper dynamic ones do!! (Cheaper drivers, not price!) I'll take a meager shot at an answer, knowing that Wayne's response will trump mine.....I think I know what you mean, but "clear" and "convey a similar amount of information" seem like a bit of two different things. It seems you are saying that at low volumes (but high power, as electrostats need a lot of power to get going even at low volumes) the electrostats present a sound that is revealing, maybe life-sized, stable, and perhaps musical? I think it depends very much on what these other dynamic speakers are that you are referencing. Many average non-electrostatic speakers need to be played at a certain healthy volume level to sound like they are doing something, but the better horn/high eff. designs do this from low levels on up. Plus, a dipole is radiating more power into the room at seeming low volumes than you might imagine. My Maggies always needed 10:00 on the volume knob to even begin to spring to life, and even when the subjective volume was low, they were eating considerable power. Then when things got really interesting, they were either gobbling all the power I had, or sounding like they were suffering a compression of dynamic range. They simply couldn't handle the dynamics when it came time to let'em rock. I did like them for creating a large soundstage, though. My current speakers, however, need 1/10 the power to get cruisin'. I think I understand your point, but being specific would help answer this. It is entirely possible that these "dynamic" speakers, regardless of price point, used fairly mediocre/higher distortion drivers, or suffered from a less-than-optimum cabinet design. I am pretty familiar with the sound and characteristics of the drivers (JBL 2226 woofer, JBL 2426 tweeter) that can comprise a professional series 4 Pi, and they are good, accurate devices.....and I have owned and listened to various electrostats and planars for years.....they were my favorites for a long time.....but frankly I think you just need to hear one of Wayne's speakers...a good system like his will give you clarity and a big soundstage, but will add dynamics and impact. This ain't PR, it's just why I drifted into this camp and stayed. Within the horn/high efficiency realm, guys like to disagree about some of the specifics, but they are all fans of the genre for a good reason. Give us an idea what some of the speakers you have heard are. They may help with an answer.

Subject: Re: 4 Pis at low volumes

Posted by [spkrman57](#) on Thu, 24 Jan 2002 11:37:08 GMT

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I think the point to be made here (forgive me if I go in the wrong direction) is at a low reference listening level, the electrostatics will seem to be more natural, while using set of Pro pi4's, I would say they need a couple of watts to start cooking properly. I think electrostatics sound wonderful, but would never want to use them for any music selections that have high dynamics in the recording. If you listen to large bands/classical or any "high-impact" recordings, I think the electrostatics just don't fit the bill. Listen to a well recorded marching band selection on a set of Pro pi4's at a realistic level (same as what the band would sound like live) and the electrostatics could not recreate the feeling. (If you tried, the electrostatics would most likely self-destruct) Once you have heard a good pro sound system from most of the high quality manufacturers, everything else sounds like a transistor radio. Yes the Jbl 2226's need a few watts to start really performing, but when they do, I ask myself, Is there anything else for me????? (no brainer for me, only hope my ears hold up, at 45 years old already have some tinninitus) Regards, Just my opinion, Ron

Subject: Re: 4 Pis at low volumes

Posted by [BrianG](#) on Thu, 24 Jan 2002 12:00:42 GMT

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I too have Magneplanars and your description is exactly the effect I am talking about. My question was also prompted by a post on the High Efficiency forum saying that the JBL woofers needed to be played loud "because of their stiff suspension". I am almost ready to take the jump and make a pair of 4 pis, but I wanted to be sure that they wouldn't suffer from the "Magneplanar Effect". Thanks, Brian

Subject: the jbl's play fine at 75 dB,
Posted by [Sam P.](#) on Thu, 24 Jan 2002 12:48:26 GMT
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and at any volume you can tolerate. I think the 4648A-8 sys eff. is only 97 dB, and my HF (106 dB nominal) is padded down to match them. It seems hard to understand, but even at modest LR listening levels, these speakers do in fact seem to "break in" and go from great to awesome in about 2 weeks time. One pair is x'd passive at 600/12 dB/octave (long wall), another pair x'd at 1200/series/6(?)dB/octave (short wall). All HF shelved 9 dB. Switching from one pair to the other, there is little difference in the perceived overall tonal balance, in spite of the xover and room position differences, except the pair x'd at 1200 does not "sound" as loud subjectively, but they have a lot less playing time on them at present. The "stiff suspension myth"...think about the spec for BI the 2226J's have, and how little a large diaphragm (or two!) really needs to move to generate 80 dB levels. Sounded like a nice theory, in practice I doubt it matters at all. The stiff suspension "implication" is that these drivers are some how "unsuited" for use at home listening levels...and my experience is just the opposite, I have found these drivers to be very articulate at low levels. Sam

Subject: Re: the jbl's play fine at 75 dB,
Posted by [BrianG](#) on Thu, 24 Jan 2002 19:19:29 GMT
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I will be asking Wayne to send me the plans.Thanks,Brian