

PRO AUDIO REVIEW

The Industry's Equipment Authority

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EQUIPMENT REVIEW

This monitor system is the most realistic and musical sounding I have heard in many years. The Blue Sky with one-inch baffles on front and rear. The sub measures 13 inches (H) x 16 inches (W) x 13.4 (D) and weighs 48.5 pounds. Comes with isolation feet are included. The sub has a 4th-order low-pass filter at 80 Hz. Built into the sub cabinet is a power amp that provides 100W at 0.01 percent THD at 100 Hz. On the back panel are the amplifier heat sink, IEC power connector, on-off switch, volume pot (0 to infinity dB), and six XLR connectors. These connectors are labeled Right



Fast Facts

Applications:

Studio, multimedia, project studio

Key Features:

Two powered satellite speakers; one powered subwoofer; satellite - 5.25-inch aluminum alloy cone woofer; 3/4-inch tweeter; magnetic shielding; subwoofer - eight-inch aluminum cone woofer

Price:

\$1,195

Contact:

Blue Sky International/Group
One at 516-249-3662,
www.abluesky.com.

in/Right out, Left in/Left out, and Sub in/Sub out.

According to the manufacturer, the satellite frequency response is ± 1.5 dB from 200 Hz to 10 kHz (-3 dB at 80 Hz - 20 kHz), while the sub response is ± 3 dB from 35 Hz to 200 Hz in a typical room using a direct feed (i.e. without the low-pass filter engaged).

The user manual is clear, offering tips on setup, signal connections, controls and connectors, and specifications. Instructions are given for calibrating the system with pink noise, an SPL meter and a 1/3-octave RTA.

I found the ProDesk system easy and intuitive to set up, thanks to the large, clear block diagram on the sub's back panel. I placed the ProDesk satellites on stands behind my console, two feet from the rear of the speakers to an absorbent wall behind them. They were at ear height and toed-in to aim at me. The satellites needed to be placed far from adjacent walls to avoid a mid-bass buildup. I placed the sub under the console and adjusted its level by ear until it sounded balanced with the satellites. Here are my impressions of the ProDesk system reproducing some musical instruments:

Drums: Clear and smooth.

Kick drum: Tight. Good but not aggressive attack. A bass-drum roll is very audible, but is not ultra deep.

Cymbals and percussion: Smooth, delicate and sweet, with extended high frequencies.

Piano: Mostly uncolored. Slightly warm, not metallic or harsh.

Electric guitar: Combines warmth and "bite."

Electric bass: Fairly deep and tight. Full. Well balanced with the rest of the audio range. Uniform loudness of notes. Very deep notes are slightly weak (maybe with some frequency doubling).

Acoustic bass: Full but not overwhelming. Tight and well controlled.

Acoustic guitar: Gentle, delicate and warm.

Sax: Realistic. Pleasantly warm and mellow. Edge or breathiness is somewhat muted.

Strings, brass and woodwinds: Natural timbres. No harshness.

Flute: Natural, with a realistic amount

Blue Sky ProDesk Sat5

Active Satellites and Sub8 Active Subwoofer

Figure 1 shows the anechoic frequency response of the Blue Sky ProDesk system in a free field. It is nearly flat, ± 3 dB from 40 Hz to 19 kHz. There is a 3 dB dip around 2.2 kHz, which can contribute to a lack of harshness.

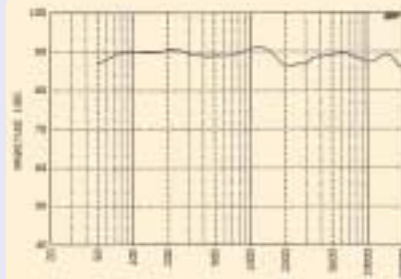


Figure 1. System anechoic frequency response, 1/3-octave smoothed.

Bench Measurement

Not shown is the response at 30 degrees off-axis. It is very uniform, within 2.5 dB of the front response up to 12 kHz. A producer and engineer seated side-by-side will hear almost the same tonal balance from the ProDesk system (except for the usual phase cancellations of dual sound sources heard off-axis).

Figure 2 shows the Energy Time Curve of a satellite speaker, which correlates with its transient response. The direct-sound spike is very sharp, and delayed vibrations are down 28 dB or more. This sharp transient response contributes to the system's fine sense of detail in time and space.

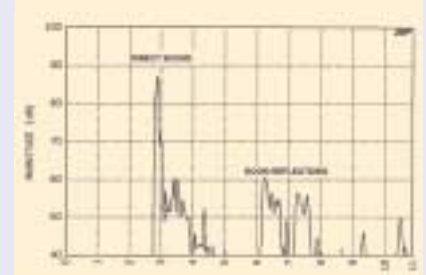


Figure 2. Energy Time Curve.

Figure 3 shows the Total Harmonic Distortion vs. frequency of the subwoofer (from 20 Hz to 80 Hz) and the satellite (from 100 Hz to 800 Hz). THD is inaudible except marginally at 100 Hz and below 50 Hz.

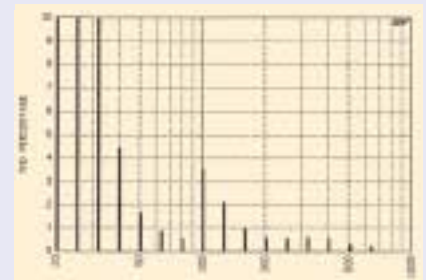


Figure 3. System Total Harmonic Distortion vs. frequency at 90 dB SPL, 1 meter.

of breathiness.

Voice: "Human" sounding. Not too much sibilance unless the voice was recorded with a high-frequency boost.

I did some mixes on the ProDesk system and almost instantly I felt comfortable with its sound and found it very easy to work with. The mixes translated well to other speakers.

Overall, these Blue Sky monitors sound musical and pleasant. They have very low distortion and low listening fatigue. Imaging is sharp and the sense of depth is impressive. I heard unusually good separation of instruments in loud, complex mixes. What's more, the system provides excellent resolution of reverb.

The Blue Sky ProDesk sub/satellite system sounds wonderful and has impressive measurements. It offers low fatigue and excellent resolution of detail. Near large surfaces, its sound becomes slightly warm in the upper bass but this is not judged to be a problem. Although the lowest bass notes lack weight, this might be an anomaly of my control room.

Since the ProDesk system is self-contained, easy to set up, and compact, a group of SAT5s and a SUB8 subwoofer could make an excellent surround monitoring system.

Bruce Bartlett is a technical writer, a recording engineer and an audio journalist. He is the author of Practical Recording Techniques, Third Edition, published by Focal Press.

Product Points

BLUE SKY PRODESK

Plus

- + Smooth, uncolored and realistic
- + Tight, full bass
- + High value
- + Excellent detail and sharp imaging
- + Solid construction
- + Low distortion and listening fatigue

Minus

- Extreme deep bass is weak, but this might be my listening room.
- Slightly warm-sounding near surfaces (but this is easy to get used to).