

Energy Connoisseur Speaker System

An impressive speaker solution for a home theatre

This month Toronto HiFi fell in love. It was lust at first sight, which developed into respect and admiration as we became more familiar with each other. It's a classic story of guy meets attractive speaker system. They live together for a few weeks. The guy introduces the speakers to his sister, brother and soon to be sister in law. Everyone is impressed. However, the romance ended abruptly as we grudgingly returned the speakers to Joe, the Brand Manager for Energy Speakers at Toronto-based Audio Products International (API).

The package we received consisted of a pair of Connoisseur C-7 floor standing speakers for the front, a pair of Connoisseur C-3 bookshelf speakers for the rear surrounds, the C-C3 centre channel and the S10.2 subwoofer, all finished in black ash. A pair of C-ST speaker stands were also provided.

These speakers have a very modern look to them. The black finish contrasts nicely with the matte silver front baffles. These baffles are made of Spherex, a polymer injection-molded resin infused with hollow-glass spheres. This is a high strength compound that can be molded into complex shapes to aid in driver dispersion. The woofer cones are made from an injection molded homopolymer whose colour matches the baffles, for a very clean look. Another innovative feature of the Connoisseur's is the grill attachment. Unlike conventional grills these are held in place by magnets that look like wrench bits. Not only does this make it super easy to remove and replace the black cloth grills, they give the Connoisseurs a subtle high tech/industrial look. The aesthetic balance of the Connoisseurs is completed by darkness of the port below the woofers and the darkness of the black baffles surrounding the 1" aluminum dome tweeter. These speakers looked so good we rarely put the covers on. The tweeter has been crossed over at a curiously low frequency of 2

Khz. This is to aid in dispersion of the important midrange frequencies. The Spherex compound, homopolymer woofer material and the tweeter are all technologies that have trickled down from the higher-end Veritas line.

The C-7s present a slender and unobtrusive façade, and were easily placed in our room. The C-3s, with their bigger 6 1/2" woofers (as opposed to the 5 1/2" of the C7s) rested easily and purposefully atop the C-ST-1 stands that had been shipped with the rest of the speakers. The C-C3 center channel however was a bit cumbersome to place on top of the television, but we creatively designed a platform for C-C3. The center channel's two woofers are also 6 1/2" and this made it look quite a bit chunkier than the C-7s. This visual disparity was a non issue when watching movies in the dark and completely acceptable given the C-C3's excellent performance. It should also be noted that two foam plugs were included with the C-C3. These plugs are meant for the rear ports when the C-C3 is used in cabinet applications.

The S10.2 subwoofer features a forward firing 10" polypropylene cone with a hefty 28 ounce magnet and 1.5" voice coil, driven by a newly designed 150 watt RMS MOSFET amplifier. The bass reflex cabinet has two front vents. This allows for more silent operation when the sub is pumping hard. The S10.2 provides for High, or Low level connections on its rear panel. The high level method is for receivers without a dedicated RCA subwoofer output. The sub is connected to the receiver using

QUICK INFO

Manufacturer: Energy Speaker Systems
www.energy-speakers.com
 Front floor-standing C-7s
 Bookshelf C-3s
 Centre channel C-C3
 Subwoofer: S10.2



speaker terminals at the rear of the S10.2. If your receiver has a sub out put, then you connect that to the input jack on the rear of the sub cabinet. Using this method the volume and low pass filter controls are functional. A third option is available if an external crossover is used. Using this method the connection is made to the

watching more "explosive" movies. The manual recommends leaving the switch in Audio mode when listening to music, but we left it in Video mode for greater impact when listening to some bass heavy music.

Initially, we hooked up a Pioneer DV-563A-S (also reviewed in this issue) to our Onkyo TX-SR701



Above: The Connoisseur C-C3 centre channel in a Black Ash finish.

sub via the "crossover" input. Your system components will determine which method you use, but the High level connection can be used with any equipment. We fiddled around and settled on using the sub input. The S10.2 is equipped with an Auto On/Off circuit which activates the sub when a signal is detected. The Circuit will turn the sub off when there is no signal present. This means that the A/C power switch on the rear panel can be left on, unless the sub will not be used for extended periods of time.

Controls for the S10.2 are conveniently located at the front. This includes the volume control (BL) and low pass filter (LFE) which adjusts the low frequency roll-off, from 50HZ-100Hz. This allows for matching bass reproduction of the sub with that of the main speakers. A much appreciated feature of the S10.2 is the Audio/Video equalizer switch located between the rotary BL and LFE controls. When in the Audio position the equalizer circuit is not engaged. However, in the Video position the equalizer circuit is engaged and it adds more punch to the frequency response, which came in handy when

receiver. This unit plays DVD-Audio, Super Audio CDs, DVD-R/RW, CD-R/RW, MP3, JPEG as well as conventional DVD-Video.

The first two CDs we played through this setup was Verve's *Remixed2/Unmixed2* compilation, the second in an innovative series from the Verve record label. What Verve has done is recruited some of today's best electronic music producers and asked them to remix some of yesterday's favorite jazz tracks.

The Connoisseurs were more than up to the task of reproducing Nina Simone's soulful vocals from the song Sinnerman, bringing the late 'High Priestess of Soul' back to life. The quick hi-hats, subtle bass line and Simone's deft piano work seemed to inspire the Connoisseurs and brought huge smiles to our faces. For comparison's sake we then played Felix Da HouseCat's Heavenly House Mix of "Sinnerman". It has the traditional 4/4 beat of house with a heavy kick drum and it emphasized the piano riff of the original. It gave the S10.2 a chance to stretch its legs and shine. The horns in Archie Shepp's Blues for Brother George Jackson, everything from the tenor sax, cornet,

trumpet, flugelhorn and trombone, came through distinctly, clearly and sharply.

We then relaxed to Esteban's *Enter the Heart* album released by OCI records and DTS Entertainment on DVD-Audio. The surround format of DVD-Audio took a little getting used to, initially. However, this gave the rear C-3's and the center C-C3 their chance to perform. And perform they did. Small details, such as Esteban's nails plucking the strings and his fingers sliding down the guitar strings were handled well by the Energy system.

The last CD we listened to was Michael Jackson's *Thriller* album in the Super Audio CD (SACD) format. The soundstage and imaging of the Connoisseur's was quite impressive. We closed our eyes and truly enjoyed the music. That funky "Billie Jean" bass line never sounded so good.

To complete our listening session, we hooked up a Technics SL-1200 MKII turntable with a Shure Whitelabel phono cartridge to our Onkyo receiver. The results were spectacular! Everything sounded like never before. From *10 Saxophones and 2 Basses* by Pete Rugolo and his orchestra, on Mercury records, to a *Disco Fire* compilation, on K-Tel records to the deep soulful house sounds of Kaskade's *It's you, It's me* album, on OM Records, the records seemed to finally reveal themselves. C-7's in conjunction with the S10.2 sub reproduced the warmth of the vinyl and subtleties of the music like no home or club system ever had, even in our bright listening room.

Our movie watching experience on the Energy package consisted of, the 25th anniversary DVD release of *Scarface*, *Lord of the Rings - The Two Towers* and *Pearl Harbour*. Even with the re-mastering of *Scarface* it could not match the newer movies in terms of sound and picture quality. It's still a classic none the less. The other two movies proved to us that having a good home theater setup, makes going out to the movies almost unnecessary. We heard the horses galloping away, and planes doing



Above: The C-3 bookshelf speaker in a beautiful Canadian Maple finish.

overhead flybys, felt bombs explode, feet stomp, armies march and bullets graze our heads from behind. All the while, the dialogue was properly textured. The C-3s were quite impressive and provided unexpected punch and dynamics in our movie watching. In fact, the C-3s performed admirably when we set them up as front channels.

The Connoisseurs proved to be very versatile. From Jazz to Electronica, Pop and Acoustic guitar, to Explosive and Dramatic Hollywood movies, from Stereo to 5.1 surround, from Vinyl to SACD, we were never left wanting more.

Energy's design philosophy and goals of flat on-axis frequency response, wide and constant dispersion and low distortion and resonance, are very high and admirable goals. The Energy speaker system we tested reaches a high level of performance with out the high level price one would expect of such performance. Not only that but they are distinctively styled and would complement any home theatre. Bottom line - you should definitely consider auditioning these speakers to hear just how good they can sound.