



Infinity Classia C205 Bookshelf Loudspeaker Reviewed

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Founded in 1968 by physicist Arnie Nudell and electronic engineer John Ulrick, weapons systems designers for Litton Guidance and Control Systems in Woodland Hills, California, Infinity pioneered the category of servo-controlled woofers. After the two audio legends combined a servo-controlled woofer with an electrostatic panel, the Servo-Static 1 was born and, with it, a new chapter in high-end audio history. Infinity went on to produce a stunning amount of world-class loudspeaker products and dabbled in electronics and even tonearms (Remember the incredible Black Widow? OK, probably not...). Infinity's speakers combined speed with power in a way the world had never seen, using ultra-fast ribbon-based EMIT and EMIM (Electro Magnetic Induction Tweeter/Midrange) drivers and innovative woofer designs to create their open, transparent sound. Eventually, after achieving fame and fortune, Nudell sold the company to Harman International, and from there the company began its commercial era. Infinity has since drifted in and out of significance, relegating itself mostly to mass market home and car efforts but occasionally introducing a higher end offering.



Inspired by their Cascade series, Infinity's Classia series, introduced in the middle of 2008, combines high performance with an elegant, slim design suited to complement flat panel televisions. The series consists of five models - the C205 Bookshelf Speaker (reviewed here), C336 Floorstanding Speaker, CC225 Center Channel, C255ES Surround Speaker, and PSW310 Wireless Powered Subwoofer. Classia features a unique, very contemporary cosmetic look, with smooth curves, beveled cabinets, silver trim, and gloss black and cherry veneer finish options. The C205 (\$698.00 per pair MSRP) looks like no other bookshelf speaker in the world, by a large margin. Its angled, contoured top rolls into its silver trimmed grill, and extends out, lip-like over the front-to-back tapered cabinet (Want to put your glasses on the top? Forget it...). The beveled cabinet gives it a neat, pleated look, completing its striking profile. The front-ported C205 employs a 1-inch tweeter crossed over at 2kHz and 24dB per octave to a 5.25-inch woofer, both using Infinity's patented CMMD driver technology, which bonds a ceramic compound to a metallic substrate for low mass and high rigidity, according to the company. The tweeter, which the company claims to play out to 40kHz, utilizes the company's Constant Acoustic Impedance (CAI) waveguide, intended to increase efficiency and lower distortion, much like traditional waveguides. The C205 offers on-board mounting capability, and provides a pair of gold-plated, 5-way binding posts mounted nicely on a fitting inset into the cabinet. Measuring a compact 7.5 inches wide by 15.125 inches high by 9.25 inches deep and weighing in at 10.8 pounds, the C205 provides a pretty small but hefty footprint, with excellent fit and finish. While the look may not appeal to everyone, Infinity showed some real guts and innovation with this design. The industry needed to evolve and begin creating speakers to complement flat panel televisions; Infinity, as an industry leader, stepped up and helped start the ball rolling (along with a handful of other companies). Regardless of whether they succeed or fail with this particular series, Infinity deserves tremendous credit for its leadership here and has further strengthened its brand on that basis alone.

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Keywords

Infinity, Infinity Classia reviewed, Infinity C205 reviewed, CMMD, Constant Acoustic Waveguide (CAI), bookshelf speakers, flat panel television speakers, monitor speakers, cherry speakers

Sound

The C205 presents a nominal 8 ohm load with an 88dB efficiency. The speaker needed good quality power to sound its best, and suffered when powered by average power sources.

While Infinity designed the C205 to pair with flat panel televisions and, therefore, video material, this review focused on music playback only. The C205 threw a deep, wide soundstage with good imaging properties. The speaker tended to err on the smooth side rather than the vibrant one, which gave images a bit of a fuzzy quality. The highs offered just enough detail to balance out their excellent smoothness, but this stalled a bit when moving downward into the midrange. Especially on classical, vocal, and piano tracks, the C205 needed a bit more detail, immediacy and transparency. The speaker certainly sounded good, just not particularly engaging or incisive. Things improved in this regard on rock and electronic material. In the lower regions, the C205 came to life a bit, especially, again, on rock and electronic material. The bass showed more extension than punch, but still packed a wallop every now and then. Interestingly, the C205's bass gave a real sense of warmth and heft to large-scale classical tracks. Despite its conservative sonic character, the C205 exhibited remarkable coherence, which gave it some good speed and enabled it to remain musical overall. Its flaws stayed constant across the frequency spectrum, and never impeded upon the overall experience. The speaker also played loudly when asked, with very little breakup. Against a wall, things improved, albeit modestly. The front porting kept the bass even, although the overall balance seemed a little fuller and more complete on the bottom end. The speaker's robust design and construction run counter to its conservative sonics, which makes perfect sense given its target market. While not evaluated in this regard, the C205 seems perfect for home theater and gaming applications, where bang and crash rule the roost.

High Points

- The C205 provides a smooth sound quality that sounds particularly good on rock and electronic material.
- The C205 offers a stunning cosmetic profile that fits wonderfully into today's modern decors featuring flat panel televisions.
- The C205 plays loudly with little breakup.
- The C205 provides on-board mounting capability, and two different finishes.

Low Points

- The C205 lacks the last level of detail, especially on classical, vocal, and piano tracks.
- The C205 needs good quality power to sound its best, and suffers with lesser power sources.
- The C205's very unique cosmetics may inspire a "love it or hate it" reaction.

Conclusion

Despite its lack of inner detail on music material, the C205 does a number of things very well, and, most importantly, achieves exactly what Infinity likely intended. It offers a stunning, modern cosmetic that will look great in a myriad of settings and add some real zest to the company's brand. It speaks to the market's huge need for products to complement flat panel televisions. And it most likely sounds spectacular in a home theater or gaming setting. So when you're done with the popcorn, it will do just fine with Pink Floyd during intermission as you decide between Halo and Madden.



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