



Infinity Primus P142 Bookshelf Loudspeaker Reviewed

By: HomeTheaterReview.com

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January 2, 2010

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Back in the 70s, any given hi-fi nut would have likely never imagined coming face to face with any Infinity product relegated to anything less than grandiose aspirations. The company blazed too many trails and pleased and upset too many people to end up as just another speaker hooked up to a switchbox on a wall. But here we are in 2009, and it still makes me a little uncomfortable seeing that logo (still so sexy) on anything sitting on worn out working carpet on a chipped shelf playing intermittent low volume satellite radio under a light bright enough to produce a nice bronze shade on the bald spot. But you can't argue with success, and Infinity has that in spades. And, every now and then, they crank out something memorable...or, at least, solid and worth the effort.



Infinity's Primus P152 Bookshelf Speaker makes quite an impression and represents something beyond the norm in the category. Part of its "Primus" series of value-oriented music and home theater loudspeakers, the P152 has a big and little brother (the P162 and P142, respectively), with the P142 reviewed here. The Primus models offer some of the company's innovative technologies in a compact, affordable package. In addition to the three bookshelf speakers, the line provides two floorstanding speakers (P252/362), two center channels (PC250/350), and three powered subwoofers (PS28/210/212). Essentially a smaller version of the P152, the P142 couples a 0.75-inch tweeter (mounted in a waveguide to increase efficiency and lower distortion) to a 4-inch woofer, both composed of the company's MMD (Metal Matrix Diaphragm) material, which consists of an aluminum core anodized on both sides. The drivers cross over at 3kHz, at 24dB per octave. The company prefers MMD to the paper, polypropylene, and Kevlar cones used by its competitors. The design employs a front port, located on the bottom left of the silver-colored baffle. The P142 (\$198 per pair, MSRP) provides a pair of gold-plated, 5-way binding posts, mounted on a solid fitting that protrudes slightly out of the cabinet, along with on-board mounting capability. Measuring 5.9375 inches wide by 9.875 inches high by 6.8125 inches deep and weighing in at an even 7 pounds, the P142 has a nice compact footprint and some heft, as well. The smooth black vinyl overwrap and cool looking silver grill that slightly protrudes over the top provide an elegant look with some flair, and the silver baffles look great. The P142 provides a good level of fit and finish, and might carry it a little better on its compact frame than does its big brother.

Sound

The P142 presents a nominal 8 ohm load with an 86dB efficiency. The speaker needed good quality power to sound its best, and suffered with average power sources.

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The P142 threw a surprisingly deep, wide soundstage with very good imaging properties. The soundstage often drifted outside of the box, with sizing way out of line with its small cabinet. The P142's treble virtually mimicked that of its big brother, with a crispy, detailed feel diluted with just the right amount of smoothness most of the time. Occasionally, things got a bit too hot up there, but often that occurred with an equally hot recording. The P142's midrange sounded just as terrific as its big brother's. Actually, the smaller woofer made for an even more elegant, liquid feel with great speed and finesse for such an affordable design. It made vocals effortless and listenable, and handled even intense classical piano without an issue. However, while the midrange offered even more transparency and liquidity than that of the P152, it also had just a tad less fullness overall (maybe due to the lower crossover?). This, however, never intruded on the mids overall appeal, which made the speaker very inviting and effortless. Into the bass, the P142 provided a good amount of tightness and punch, with less extension and weight than the P152. Not a surprise, certainly, given the smaller woofer, but this lighter rendering actually gave the P142 a more balanced feel than the bigger speaker, which tended to sound flabby overall on the low end. It tightened up the whole package very nicely, and pushed the P142 into a very enthusiastic recommendation. Moving closer to a wall, the sound fattened up a bit, which sometimes even improved things, and never marred the overall tight and focused approach. The P142 also performed very well at high volumes, exhibiting little breakup. This, of course, occurred when the speaker had good quality power driving it. Average power sources sounded very below average at normal volumes, let alone high ones. Overall, the P142 offers a very balanced, musical approach, with well-timed, crisp bass that blends wonderfully with the fantastic top end. Its flaws never hinder the enjoyment of the music, or affect its coherence in any way. When combined with its very affordable price, the P142 delivers one of the highest value propositions in the category.

High Points

- The P142 provides a very well balanced, musical, listenable presentation that keeps its focus over all types of material.
- The P142's midrange offers some qualities more often found in higher end models, with very good detail, speed, and liquidity.
- The P142 plays loudly with little breakup.
- The P142 offers a modern cosmetic profile with its silver grills and baffle, but with enough conservative touches to keep its appeal down the middle.

Low Points

- The P142's midrange occasionally seemed a bit lightweight.
- The P142 sounded just a shade too crisp in the high end, depending on the recording.
- The P142 needs good quality power to perform its best.
- The P142 only comes in a Black finish.

Conclusion

The Infinity P142 really packs a serious punch. It provides a combination of speed, coherence, transparency, and dynamics that make listening to all types of music a pleasure. It invites you in and pleases in a multitude of ways, while offending in none. Its flaws, even on an absolute basis, don't register very often and easily get swallowed up in its overall sonic palette. The speaker looks good, too, and offers some welcome ergonomic touches. For the money, it ranks as one of the

very best in its category. Infinity has done its name proud with the P142.



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Keywords

Infinity, Infinity Primus reviewed, Infinity P142 reviewed, MMD, Metal Matrix Diaphragm, bookshelf speakers, monitor speakers