STEREO SPEAKERS



Andrew Everard
MAY 20, 2025

PMC prophecy5

PART OF A BRAND-NEW SERIES FROM THE BRITISH STUDIO-TO-LIVING-ROOM EXPERTS, THIS COMPACT FLOORSTANDER MAY BE SHORT, BUT IT'S NOT SHORT ON MUSICAL INVOLVEMENT – AS ANDREW EVERARD DISCOVERS...

REVIEW REPRINTED FROM WWW.SOUND-ADVICE.ONLINE



REVIEW

And lo, it came to pass that, having successfully launched the entry-level prodigy series to no little acclaim, the good people of PMC looked unto the twenty25i range, and decided it could be bettered. Strange, perhaps, as it had recently launched active versions of the same models - but then hi-fi companies often move in a mysterious way, their wonders to perform.

The result is the prophecy series – yes, another small 'p' – comprising the bookshelf/standmount prophecy1 (£2875 per pair) and three floorstanding models, the smallest of which is this £4575 prophecy5. There's also a matching centre channel speaker, the prophecy, for surround systems.

This isn't a mild refresh of the twenty5i line, but rather a complete rethink of the design - of everything, from cabinets to drivers and even the company's celebrated Advanced Transmission Line bass tuning technology, complete with its 'Laminair' system to smooth the all-important airflow. PMC talks a lot about the speakers being the result of a 'holistic' design process, in which every component has been engineered with reference to all the others. Even the packaging of the speakers has been completely overhauled, of which more in a moment.

Available in a choice of sustainable real wood finishes – Mediterranean oak, natural walnut and blackened walnut – the prophecy is a slim, compact floorstander, just 92cm tall with spikes. In fact, as I discover when setting the speakers up in my listening room, it's just about the same dimensions as the prodigy5 model. Even the briefest glance reveals that the two are very different designs, though.

Talking of setting up, a word about that new packaging - not usually a subject of discussion in hi-f reviews. In common with some other brands, PMC has gone full 'eco' with the boxes in which the prophecy models are delivered. Out has gone the expanded polystyrene and plastic bags, replaced by cardboard spacers within the double-walled cartons, and a drawstring cloth bag (which my wife agrees will be handy for laundry) enclosing the speaker.

And the new box makes unpacking the prophecy5 a breeze. Cut through some paper adhesive tape holding it all together, and the front and top of the packaging folds out to reveal the speaker standing in its cloth bag - it makes it easy to extract and position. Add in a sensible weight – just under 18kg apiece – and easy-to-handle dimensions, and this is one of the simplest speakers to unpack and set up I have encountered since the massive Bowers & Wilkins 801D5 flagships (which come on castors and roll down a little ramp formed by the lower part of their packing crate). Mind you, those monsters are a little over 100kg a pop!

From the drivers to the 'Laminair' technology, all is new here - and it's fundamental stuff, from the oval sub-baffle (shaped to control diffraction) in which the treble and mid/bass drivers sit, to the finned vent at the bottom of the front baffle. That last is a fundamental part of the design here. It replaces the plastic devices used in past models (dubbed 'LaminairX'), and

it's a substantial aluminium extrusion sitting at the end of the Advanced Transmission Line 'tunnel' folded up within the cabinet. It's designed not only to smooth the airflow, but also to anchor the speaker with its sheer mass. In fact, it forms the entire base of the speaker, with the woodwork decoupled from it using a gasket, and a solid mounting for the set of high-quality, black-finished spikes - round 'spike shoes' to protect hard or delicate floors, are also provided.

The speakers come complete with full length magnetically attached grilles with a classy textured finish. I will risk sounding like a hi-fi geek by saying they look rather anonymous with the grilles in place, because all that interesting engineering stuff, from the matte black housing for the drivers to that finned opening at the base, is hidden.

The tweeter unit is a 25mm soft-dome model derived from PMC's studio monitoring speakers, fitted into a waveguide in the baffle to control its dispersion and better integrate with the new 12.5cm mid/bass unit that's been designed expressly for this range. This has a long-throw voice-coil and extended magnet field, delivering greater power-handling, lower distortion and smoother frequency response, while the cone is decidedly non-exotic - it's made from mineral-filled polypropylene, purely because this was found to be the best match to the new transmission line design. Holistic design, y'see?

SOUND QUALITY

I first hear the new prophecy series during a meeting up at PMC's country house HQ just off the A1, and must admit to being somewhat startled by just how big an advance the new speakers represent over the prodigy5 I've used in one of my systems for a while. Now I've spent time with the prophecy5 in the same system (which uses an EverSolo DMP-A6 Master Edition network player running through a pair of vintage tiny-but-powerful Marantz monobloc power amplifiers), it's clear my initial impression isn't just the result of some clever 'demo-craft' by the PMC team. These new speakers sound even better now than they did then.

All the vital signs are in place. They create a totally convincing stereo image, are open and involving, and have prodigious bass extension and control for speakers taking up no more space than a pair of little bookshelf two-ways on stands. But the best thing is how effortless and unforced the whole experience is, with no sense of any element of the system having to work hard to deliver a big, enveloping musical experience.

One uses the term ‘magical’ sparingly in reviews like this, but that’s what the effect here is. I’ve heard a lot of much more expensive speakers in my time - but few have communicated that sense of a performance, with nothing between the recording and the listener, as well as these unassuming-looking compact speakers.

I do try to catch them out, promise, with everything from breathy solo vocals to the fine details of Chopin nocturnes, and from the latest release of Hawkwind’s space-foolery to the massive Flying Dutchman overture from the recent Edward Gardner/Norwegian National Opera recording (which has some serious clout and dynamics). But the PMCs just take it in their stride, as if saying ‘go on, crank it some more – dare you.’

That said, you don’t have to push their seemingly limitless dynamic envelope to hear them at their best. Even when pootling through some simple trio jazz, they delight with their insight and realistic voices and instruments as much as they do when snarling out some driving rock or a full-scale orchestral piece at sensible levels.

They’re suitably lush with Elgar’s oh-so-English first symphony, breathy with Kate Bush’s *Army Dreamers*, and at once refined and powerful with David Helbock’s solo piano during *Duel of the Fates* from *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace*, complete with plucked strings, from his *Playing John Williams* album. Oh, and sensational with the full LSO/John Williams orchestral/choral cue from the movie soundtrack.

LIVING WITH

These speakers are both easy to drive and simple to set up. With the right degree of toe-in towards the listening position – try angling them so you can just see the outer wall of the cabinets, at least as a starting point – the prophecy5s cast a solid, three-dimensional image between them. In addition, they also do that magical hi-fi trick of making the sound appear to spread out beyond the speakers, seemingly occupying a much greater space. This is ideal for larger orchestral works, but also serves well that sense of the sound being entirely free of the speakers, and existing in space in the listening room.

CONCLUSION

Job done all round, then – and in winning style. These are remarkable speakers for the money, a real leap forward from the already excellent prodigy series and, thanks to the application of sensible engineering and innovative design, a more-than-worthwhile upgrade on the twenty5 23i model they replace.

LISTENING NOTES

The Rolling Stones *Wild Horses*

Almost as close as the Stones get to a country ballad, the track from 1971's *Sticky Fingers* is all about close focus on the dialled-back vocal harmonies and instrumentation, and the PMCs bring out every detail

XTC *Science Friction*

Spiky, driving and unstoppable, this track from XTC's 1977 debut 3D EP set the tone for much of the output to come, with pun-laden lyrics, radio-friendly pop styles and the often-bonkers keyboards of Barry Andrews. It's a short but sweet blast through the PMCs

Justin Taylor *Chopin – Nocturne Op.9: No 1*

Living up to the *Chopin Intime* title of the recent release from which it's taken, this familiar piece shows the PMCs' ability when it comes to detail and instrumental textures, the piano sounding well-weighted and rich, but with very keystroke crisp and clear

WHY YOU SHOULD BUY IT

From sound to style, the prophecy5 appeal – and they'll suit just about any room, delivering a sound that's as big on scale and weight as it is when it comes to detail, refinement and musical involvement. Oh, and that thing about prophets not being honoured in their own land? Well, these speakers are all-British, from design to manufacture, and deserve all the honours they can get.