



It may not work
for the economy, but
Infinity proves
that it can work for
home theater.

Trickle-Down Economics

by Geoffrey Morrison

Reagan had a plan. Give more money to the haves, and eventually it will trickle down to the have-nots. In the long run, the plan didn't work, but Infinity has taken the idea to heart by putting the same excellent



Infinity Entra Speaker System

C.M.M.D. (Ceramic Metal Matrix Diaphragm) drivers that are found in their top-of-the-line speakers into their entry-level speaker system: the Entra (get it?). Audio editor Chris Lewis has praised these drivers in his reviews of the next-step-up Interludes in the July 2001 issue and the top-of-the-line Preludes in the November 2000 issue. Having heard the C.M.M.D. drivers in both of these more-expensive applications, I was very interested to see how they fared in this trickle-down application.

For this review, I chose four Entra Ones, an Entra Center, and the Entra Sub. The Entra One bookshelf speaker is 15 inches tall, 8.5 wide, and 9.75 deep. The tweeter is a 0.75-inch C.M.M.D. driver with a 2,500-hertz crossover; the Entra One sends everything below that to a 6.5-inch C.M.M.D. woofer. If you have more space (and a little more cash) available, the Entra Two is a floor-standing speaker that uses the same drivers as the Entra One. The Entra Center has the same tweeter as the Entra One and Two but uses dual

4-inch C.M.M.D. woofers. Its box is 6.5 inches tall, 17 wide, and 5.25 deep. Both the Center and the One use the same single-speaker binding posts.

Making up the bottom end is the Entra Sub, which has a 10-inch C.M.M.D. driver powered by a 150-watt (RMS) amplifier with 500-watt peak power. It measures 15 inches tall, 14.5 wide, and 17 deep. The back panel sports a direct input for your Dolby/DTS system's .1 signal and a line-level input for those of you who have a processor that has a sub-out but isn't Dolby-/DTS-ready. The line-level input activates the usually dormant crossover-frequency control that adjusts the low-pass filter from 50 to 150 Hz. If your receiver is even older (i.e., it doesn't have a subwoofer output), the sub also has speaker-level inputs and outputs, as well as a phase switch and a level control.

After a quick setup using Sony's new \$800 receiver, the STR-DA3ES (check out my review in an upcoming issue), I started

my listening session with some two-channel classical music. The Virgin Classics label has a beautiful two-disc set of the London Chamber Orchestra performing my personal favorite, Vivaldi. I was instantly impressed by the Entra Ones' clarity. The small tweeter no doubt accounts for some of the treble acuity. What surprised me most was the amount of bass these bookshelves were able to put out. The ported cabinets

HIGHLIGHTS

- **C.M.M.D. drivers always impress**
- **Very high on the accuracy-for-the-buck scale**

and 6.5-inch woofers reproduced deep cello tones with aplomb. The imaging was also excellent. Instruments that were supposed to be centered were, and those on the edges where in place, as well. The soundstage wasn't that deep, but it wasn't overly narrow, either.

Moving on to Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D minor, the Entra Ones handled the deep organ-pedal tones effortlessly—and this without the sub. After a little more fine-tuning of the Sony's

- A. The Entra One utilizes a 0.75-inch C.M.M.D. tweeter and a 6.5-inch C.M.M.D. woofer.**
- B. Infinity opted to use two smaller 4-inch C.M.M.D. woofers in the Entra Center.**
- C. For its size and price, the tiny Entra Sub is quite musical.**





Infinity Entra Speaker System

settings and the sub's level control, I dialed-in an accurate amount of bass. The Sony has a stereo-pair-plus-subwoofer mode, so I used it to see how different the sub made two-channel music sound. Many subs in this price range do one frequency really well, but that's it. The Entra Sub blended smoothly with the main speakers, proving that the best subs are the ones you don't notice.

D. The Entra Sub features a direct input, as well as both line- and speaker-level connections.

I kept with the classical theme but moved on to SACD. The Jerry Goldsmith SACD sampler has a stirring version of his theme from *Patton*. I love the movie and the

score, and this is a great recording of it. It sounds best when played loudly, so I cranked up the volume until my ears could take no more. I was able to get over 110 decibels out of the Sony receiver/Infinity Entra combo.

powerful bass, and drums all rolled together in a wonderful mix. As I rocked out to the first track, "Sodajerker," I loved how the vocals really stood out through the



Entra system. I also liked the smooth, tight bass. While it sounded clear with classical music, the treble started to lean toward sparkling with rock-'n'-roll tunes. Cymbals

were a little crisp but not harsh, thanks to the well-designed tweeter. The system was a bit bright for my tastes, but I tend to like a warmer, heavier sound, with more mid and bass than treble. Most people would probably find the extra clarity welcome. If you live in a concrete box with wood floors and no furniture, you might find this

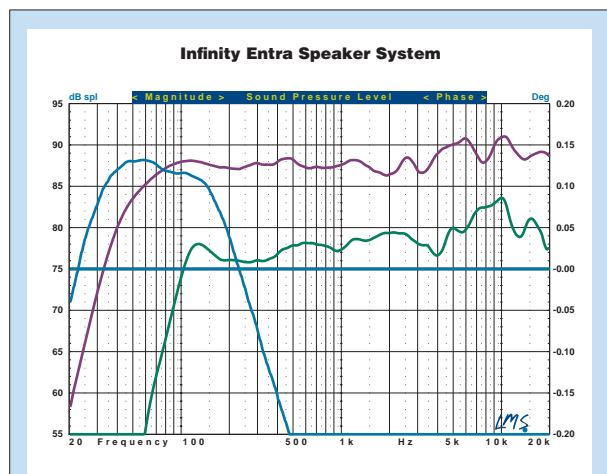
Certainly the receiver's amp contributes to this kind of volume, but the Entras achieved this ear-bleeding intensity with little or no distortion. The track's complexity also makes many center channels compress and weaken the music. The Entra Center did an impressive job of keeping the trombones audibly separate from the French horns with only a slight amount of compression—better than I would've expected from such a small speaker. And, of course, using four identical speakers and a center with the same tweeter makes for a matched sound all around.

ensemble to be a little bright. For everyone else, these speakers will probably have a flatter response in your room than most speakers in this price range.

Entra One Bookshelf Speaker	\$319/pair
Entra Center Speaker	\$219
Entra Sub Subwoofer	\$379
Infinity Systems (800) 553-3332 www.infinitysystems.com Dealer Locator Code IFY	

The last three tracks on the Burmester test CD (volume 2) are right off *The Wall* by Pink Floyd.

Buffalo Tom's stunning 1993 release *Big Red Letter Day* is full of lush guitars,



HT Labs Measures: Infinity Entra Speaker System

This graph shows the quasi-anechoic (employing close-miking of all woofers) frequency response of the Entra One satellite (purple trace), Entra Sub subwoofer (blue trace), and Entra Center center channel (green trace). All passive loudspeakers were measured at a distance of 1 meter with a 2.83-volt input and scaled for display purposes.

On-axis response of the Entra One measures +3.49/-1.12 decibels from 200 hertz to 10 kilohertz. The -3dB point is at 54 Hz, and the -6dB point is at 43 Hz. Impedance reaches a minimum of 3.65 ohms at 20 kHz and a phase angle of -65.06 degrees at 6.8 kHz. Sensitivity averages 87.5 dB from 500 Hz to 2 kHz.

On-axis response of the Entra Center measures +5.57/-2.20 dB from 200 Hz to 10 kHz. An average of axial and (+/-15 degree) horizontal responses measures +4.79/-1.66 dB from 200 Hz to 10 kHz. The -3dB point is at 103 Hz, and the -6dB point is at 94 Hz. Impedance reaches a minimum of 3.80 ohms at 16.2 kHz and a phase angle of -65.79 degrees at 4.7 kHz. Sensitivity averages 88 dB from 500 Hz to 2 kHz.

Close-miked response of the Entra Sub, normalized to the average level from 40 to 80 Hz, indicates that the lower -3dB point is at 33 Hz and the -6dB point is at 29 Hz. The upper -3dB point is at 146 Hz using the direct input.—AJ



These tracks have a nice mix of treble (cymbals and guitars) and bass (drums and bass guitar), and the Entra system reproduced them with ease. The sub caught my attention by not calling attention to itself. Instead of the boom, boom, boom that inexpensive subs tend to emit, the Entra Sub made the bass drum sound like a bass drum and the bass guitar sound like—you guessed it—a bass guitar. To be able to distinguish the two through such an inexpensive sub is quite impressive.

Jonathan Mostow's *U-571* might be a little historically inaccurate, but it's a decent ride nonetheless. Chapter 7 is where the good guys attempt to take over the bad guys' boat. Lots of gunfire, rain, music, and shouting really give speakers a workout. Here, the Entra system's extra clarity helped. I was never reaching for the remote to turn up the volume to hear a piece of dialogue, nor was I hurrying to turn it down because the sound was too harsh. Chapter 15 has our heroes getting depth-charged, which forces your sub to jog a marathon of bass-heavy explosions. With the volume up, I noticed only the slightest bit of unhappiness from the Entra system. This is more impressive than it sounds, as many systems with a much higher MSRP have a lot more trouble with this selection. The matched satellites were also a bonus here, creating seamless audio movement around the room.

For kicks, I hooked up the Entra system to an Aragon 2007 amp and Stage 1 pre/pro that Chris Lewis is reviewing for a future issue. Sure, most people who

spend \$7,000 on electronics would most likely spend a little more on speakers, but it was worth a listen to see what changed sonically. Listening to the Burmester and Goldsmith discs again, I noticed a few things. The Entra ensemble sounded more open and had a little more dynamic range. Surely this was due to the extra amp power, which reveals these speakers' potential with different (and more) amplification. However, the Entra Center seemed to compress a little more. As I listened more closely, though, I realized that the center wasn't actually compressing. Rather, the left and right speakers had opened up more, which caused the center to sound compressed. Apparently, the extra wattage doesn't open up the center as much as it does the Entra Ones. As I said before, though, for something its size, the Entra Center does a good job.

I really have no major complaints about this system. While most speakers in this price range (and many that cost more, for that matter) have noticeable dips and peaks in the frequency response, the Entra speakers are very flat. That response, some thoughtful engineering, and smart driver selection result in a system that sounds remarkably good. Overall, I found the Entra ensemble to be an intelligent choice for the home theater fan who wants more than an HTIB but doesn't want to dip into their Iran-Contra pension fund. 🍷