

SECRETS of **Home Theater** and **High Fidelity**

Product Review - Osborn Mid-Priced Home Theater Speaker System - December, 2000

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F4 Specifications

Maximum Power Handling: 120 Watts RMS
Sensitivity: 90 dB for 1 watt @ 1 meter
Frequency Response: 35 Hz – 19 kHz (-2 dB points)
Crossover Point: 3,700 Hz @ 6 dB/octave
Minimum Impedance: 6 Ohms @ 200Hz
Size: 855mm x 250mm x 280mm
Weight: 31 kg each

C2 Center Specifications

Maximum Power Handling: 120 Watts RMS
Frequency Response: 40 Hz – 19 kHz (-2 dB points)
Sensitivity: 92 dB for 1 watt @ 1 meter
Crossover Points: 200Hz and 3700Hz @ 6 dB/octave
Minimum Impedance: 4 Ohms @ 200Hz
H x W x D: 210mm x 650mm x 440mm
Weight: 27 kg

T12 Subwoofer Specifications

Frequency Response: 20 Hz – 125 Hz
Sensitivity: 92dB for 1 watt @ 1 meter
On-board (Redgum) Power Amp: 195 Watts RMS
Frequency Response: -3 dB @ 25 Hz
Adjustable Crossover from 40 Hz – 200 Hz
H x W x D: 650mm x 435mm x 450mm
Weight: 35 kg

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System as tested consists of:

Four Osborn F4s Floorstanding Loudspeakers
One Osborn C2 Center Speaker
One Osborn T12 Active Subwoofer

Introduction

With the increasing popularity of home theater, Greg Osborn of Osborn Loudspeakers has put together a package from his line of hi-fi speakers to create a middle-priced home theater speaker system. Using his smallest subwoofer (the T12, which is anything but small as you will read later), his mid-range center speaker (the C2), and his best value for money/performance floorstander (the F4), Greg gives you the true realism of home theater at a price that is still affordable. Let's see how the system has turned out.

The Equipment

Osborn F4 Loudspeaker

The enclosure, as with all Osborn products, is large and heavy, being constructed of 1.25" veneered MDF. Having a height of 860mm and a weight of 32 kg (about 70 pounds), the F4 is anything but a "run of the mill" floorstanding loudspeaker. It uses a 205mm (8") Polykevlar coned bass driver and a 20mm Kevlar tweeter that are mounted in a vertical array. The F4 runs flat to 35 Hz, and really, four of these in one room has the potential to be devastating to your innards. The internal crossover uses the finest components that Greg can source and are connected by Osborn "high speed" cables. They are bi-wirable and are also supplied with speaker spikes. All in all, a fantastic package for Greg's "best value for money loudspeaker".

Osborn C2 Center Speaker

The C2 has been specially designed to match with nearly all of the Osborn range of loudspeakers. It will handle the large power and transient demands of THX, DD, and DTS signals. The configuration uses two 179mm Neoflex bass drivers and a 20mm-titanium tweeter, with the enclosure being constructed of the same 1.25" veneered MDF, only this time in "basic black". The drivers are arranged with the tweeter between the two bass drivers. The baffle has twin 50mm ports. The C2 is also considerably heavy, weighing 29 Kg (64 pounds). Need I say how important it is to have a massive center channel speaker, when most of the movie sound is going to that channel? Frequency response (flat to 35 Hz) of the unit was designed to go as low as possible for accurate reproduction of voice and dialogue.

Osborn T12 Active Subwoofer

Powered by a 195 watt amplifier module that is designed and manufactured in Australia by Ian Robinson of Redgum Audio, the T12 is meant to be Osborn's smallest subwoofer. Yeah right! The T12 is essentially a less expensive version of the "[Osborn Monumental Subwoofer](#)" reviewed by Secrets earlier this year. It uses a driver that is in fact an exact copy of the more expensive Focal driver used in the Monumental, except it is made elsewhere at lower labor costs. Don't let that put you off, because it still had to pass the rigorous testing to be included as part of Osborn's range. I suppose you could say it's an excellent compromise between performance and price. The 300mm (12") driver is in a smaller box than its bigger brother "The Monumental". Notwithstanding this, it is still not designed with any internal tricks or

frequency compensation circuits. The excellent low frequency response is achieved through careful design and manufacturing. There is a single 100mm port on the baffle, and the rear of the unit reveals the amp module. This has high and low level inputs, adjustable crossover point, and output level controls. In this case, the T12 was supplied in the black veneer, but is also available in the same finish as the F4s (e.g., exotic Bubinga wood).

The Sound

After spending about an hour reconfiguring my Yamaha DSPA1, Toshiba SD-K330 DVD player, Redgum's new six-channel home theater amp (see review in the coming weeks), positioning the new Osborn gear and setting the levels with the aid of the AVIA test DVD and Tandy SPL meter (I was very happy to note that levels in my sound room were only 1.5 dB out between the 6 speakers @ 85dB SPL {pink noise}), I fired it up.

The first disc I played was my old faithful reference DVD, "The Matrix". What can I say? Time to get the check book out again. I can't help but marvel at all the fantastic equipment we produce here in Australia (if I do say so myself), and it is going to send me broke! Anyway, I'll stop complaining about my lack of finance and get back to the review. "The Matrix". Yeah. **Fantas-magorical!** I was re-feeling all the emotion in this very special movie. The soundstage was as close to perfect as I had ever heard. Of particular note, the final scene where the Sentinels are tearing the "NebuchadnezzaR" apart, lasers going left and right, metal shearing off in different directions, and a double-scoop of deep rumbling bass with sugar on top, all this while voices were clearly being reproduced. If at some stage I ever had any doubts about using four matched floorstanders for Dolby Digital or DTS surround, I was fully cured!

Time to dig out big action movies, so "Starship Troopers" and "Independence Day" were on tap. Timbre matching between the four F4s was absolutely perfect, as you would expect. The speed and authority were nothing short of spectacular, and my home theater was the way it should be, a totally immersing experience. The trouser-flapping bass and pin-point surround effects from these two most awesome of Sci-Fi flicks were inspirational.

The T12 sub kept up nicely, only being slightly taxed when the levels approached window cracking levels. This bass unit, as I said earlier, is similar to the Focal driver in the Monumental, and performs nearly as well, but not quite. Bass was punchy and plentiful, and most importantly, accurate.

More subtle soundtracks from flicks like "The Fugitive" grew nicely in intensity and were again, a pleasure to watch. The Osborn system definitely enhanced an already moving soundtrack.

I also noted that the C2 center speaker, while being a great sounding speaker on its own and also blending quite well with the F4s, was not a perfect match for the F4s. That is because the F4 is a very large, heavy, full range speaker, and no center that is smaller can match such a speaker. The fact that this occurs in spite of the C2 being a 64 pound monster, is testimony to how important it is to have as large a center speaker as you can, in relation to the other speakers in the system. Putting an F4 on top of your TV is not practical, hence a good compromise in the C2.

Conclusion

I highly recommend this system and as a special for Secrets readers, you can purchase the entire package at a discount price.

So there you go – great products - great price – say no more!

http://www.hometheaterhifi.com/volume_7_4/osborn-home-theater-system-12-2000.html

- *David Wurtz* -