

Induction Dynamics ID1 Loudspeakers

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INDUCTION DYNAMICS is an extremely interesting company, and they have a very different slant on speaker design. In nine short years, they have emerged from relative obscurity and put together one of the most comprehensive lines of speakers to be found anywhere. I counted 29 listings on their web site comprising every possible type of application. They make free-standing speakers as well as some in-wall designs and on-wall speakers, subwoofers, and a complicated mix of A/V surround speaker systems mounted in the walls and partially or fully outside the walls. New from ID at the time of this writing is another unique product, a speaker with a dual voice-coil motor



housing system that you can affix to walls, ceilings or any other surface to produce sound. They call it the "Solid Drive X and D." All you need to do for a full-range system is add a subwoofer, and ID says you might even place them inside a wall for a nearly invisible sound system. I am very glad that I didn't draw that review assignment; I can picture the look on my wife's face as she walks in and finds me chopping holes in our walls.

The Subject At Hand

What Ye Editor has given me to cover is the ID1, a recent addition to the ID family of products, and it is an innovative speaker design switchable between "three-way plus subwoofer" for home theater applications using items like Bass Management or four-way output for standard stereo. Our review sample has a beautiful gloss rosewood veneer and measured 45 inches high by 11 inches wide by 10½ inches deep and weighs 91 pounds. The rosewood version has an MSRP of \$8,330 but you can elect to buy it in basic black satin for \$7,080. The front baffle holds five drivers and two round flared ports, including a 1-1/8-inch inverted dome tweeter, the 3-inch soft-dome midrange, one 6½-inch Kevlar woofer and two 10-inch subwoofers with 54-ounce magnets.

The company's most prominent innovation for all of their speakers is a patented crossover design they refer to as the S4X. As you might expect, the literature does not provide a schematic diagram of this crossover, and while the written text does not get into deep details, it refers to "inductive-coupling driver control" that allows them to design a crossover with a "brick wall" slope that exceeds 30 dB within a half-octave of the crossover point. The intent here is to have the crossovers designed so that individual drivers can operate within their most accurate frequency range.

Let me get back to that "three-way plus subwoofer" or four-way operation. Induction Dynamics has placed a toggle switch on the back of each speaker cabinet. For stereo music, that is driving the speakers with a single stereo power amplifier, you place the switch in the "four-way position." You also need to have the jumpers on the binding

posts. What's switched into the circuit is the crossover between the two subwoofer drivers and the three-way covering the upper frequency range. In this configuration, all of the drivers in each speaker are powered by one signal from each channel of a single stereo amp.

Flipping the switch to the "Three-Way" position takes the crossover for the subs out of the circuit but

Despite the small size of my listening room and the large size of the ID1's, they were easy to set up.

you also need remove the jumpers from the binding posts. The result is a subwoofer (with two 10-inch drivers) and the three-way system in each cabinet. Thus, the two 10-inch subwoofers will need their own separate amplifier. You may optionally purchase either ID's Model A1 amp, a 300-watt Mos-Fet unit, or their Model A2, a 300-watt bipolar amp for dedicated subwoofer use. Both are capable of driving multiple subwoofers. The idea here is to offer the purchaser the flexibility of using the ID1 in either a high-performance stereo-only system or in an audio/video surround system with extended bass control and response capability. In this latter A/V configuration, the bass amp would probably be taking the signal output from something like a dedicated sub output of an A/V receiver, which typically has a built-in electronic subwoofer crossover. You might also add to this line up one or more of ID's four different stand-alone subs, which have drivers ranging in size from 10 inches all the way up to 18 inches. Inasmuch as the editor insists we are doing a stereo-only story, I left the switch in the four-way position, with the jumper on, so that everything was driven by one amplifier.

Preliminary Diddling

You might well ask at this point, "How do the ID1's sound?" Well, hold your horses, I'll get to that, but first I had to run them for awhile to be sure they are broken in so that we will be listening to the real deal. I do have the XLO burn-in CD for such a purpose, which would speed

up the process a bit, but I reserve that gizmo for cables and some (solid-state) electronics. For speakers, my preferred way is to play music, and I deemed 20 hours of FM radio and silver disc to be just about right for the ID1.

My very first spot-check, after about 10 hours break-in, revealed a louder or more-efficient speaker that was easier to drive than I had expected. The spec sheet states that the ID1 will give you 89-dB SPL from one-watt input at one meter over the speaker's upper bandwidth; the lower or subwoofer section is spec-ed at 89-dB SPL sensitivity, and thus matches the three-way section. In my smallish listening room, I commonly have to deal with a slightly uneven frequency response around the mid and lower bass, with some passages having a tad too-much low bass and others not enough mid-bass. An additional 10 hours of break-in served to tighten up the driver integration and seemed to help with this room-mode unevenness. I also obtained more low-level definition from the ID1 by changing my speaker wiring, shifting to a pair of Tara TFA Phase 2 speaker cables. At that point, I attached the maker-supplied floor spikes to the bottom of the speakers, and I settled on using my modified Hafler 500 Mos-Fet muscle amp to drive this test setup.

The Sound

I usually believe my first impressions of audio equipment. Most often, they hold up as I proceed into my evaluation and build layer upon layer of additional aural information, so that eventually I have an overall concept. However, my first impressions of these speakers seemed very contradictory; it was polite overall and showed speed in the midrange and treble. These two things don't usually accompany one another, at least not in my experience. After some very extended listening, I put those two quantities into a slightly different relationship, which was amended to read "harmonic integrity combined with fast reflexes".

The part about fast reflexes was evident on a cut from the Blue Note CD (7243 537823 23) *Stardust Ron Carter*. If you can hear Lenny White's brush work on cymbals

replete with its brassy snap and sizzle as clearly as I did, then you know you're really onto something. The remainder of my reassessment of harmonic integrity and speed evolved over a longer period listening to a wide variety of recordings.

If I have to choose a single recording to make my case, then it has to be the harmonic structure of the performance by Gary Karr and Harmon Lewis performing *Adagio d'Albinoni*. This wonderful resonating string bass and organ performance was recorded in a cavernous Japanese cathedral. Originally on a Japanese label, Firebird, it is now available via the Cisco Music catalog (GCD8003) though I know it from a dub on The Audiophile Society's *Reference Disc, Volume 2*, courtesy of Gene Pitts. I believe it is not enough just to dig deep and

make thunderous low bass, because it is altogether another thing to do the wood in an acoustic bass for the listener. A first-rate bass player must also be able to present his audience

My conclusion, at the end of weeks of listening, was that this is a true music lover's speaker.

the movement of the bow as it shimmers across the strings in combination with the warm and woody resonance emanating from the "f" holes in the body of the instrument. This is the signature sound of a wooden bass fiddle; in this case, Karr's instrument is a centuries old Amati. Also one should listen on

this recording to the deep organ pedal notes as they reverberate off the walls of the church. Indeed, both bass and organ sometimes suddenly stop in the midst of their music-making, and one can hear these musical notes travel down to the distant far wall of the church. Amazing! That wall then reflects the sound back toward us in a powerful wave that sometimes intensifies and sometimes weakens, but still is part of the instrument's natural live sound. I've never experienced the true size of

this wonderful resonating space where Karr and Lewis play until I heard it through the ID1. I can only say that this speaker has an extraordinary ability to keep the reverberant sound of that returning echo separate from the original sound from the source.

Summary

I must not fail to tell you that these speakers were exceptionally easy to set up in my relatively small and difficult listening space, and this despite their fairly large size. Indeed, they provided a good stereo stage, in all three dimensions, right out of the box. I venture this can be attributed to the ID crossover, the ID1's unusually precise driver integration and a wide and uniform off-axis dispersion.

So at the end of my weeks of listening, I concluded with great certainty that the ID1 is a true music lover's speaker, no small feat!

But let me elaborate: Over the years, I have watched speaker designers more and more closely in their pursuit of those things we usually associate with digital music. Like compact discs, the speakers from these designers are fast and detailed, but increasingly, these designers show an indifference to those qualities that can capture human emotion. Cannily, Induction Dynamics has found a way to walk that razor's edge to blend speed with nuance and soul.

I applaud their vision and values for they certainly have captured the essence of music in the ID1. I think you ought to consider the purchase of a pair of these speakers as a starting point for a sound system (be it standard stereo or home theater) that you will enjoy for many years to come.

NOTES

Induction Dynamics ID1 Speakers, black satin for \$7,080; rosewood for \$8,330. Induction Dynamics, 8650 College Blvd., Overland Park, KS 66210; phone 913/663-9770, fax 913/663-9790, website www.inductiondynamics.com, e-mail address sales@inductiondynamics.com.

Associated Equipment

Reference Stereo System: SOTA sapphire turntable 2, with Grado Reference arm and Alpha 2 moving coil cartridge, Cambridge Audio Discmagic-1 compact disc transport, Cambridge S-700 Isomagic D/A converter, ART DI/O up sampling A/D and D/A converter. MARANTZ DV8400 Universal CD player, Audio Research Classic 60 tube / Mos-Fet Power Amplifier for main speakers, Hafler 500 Mos-Fet power amplifier, Audio Research SP-9 MK-3 Hybrid tube Mos-Fet preamp, QUAD ESL-63 speakers rebuilt and modified sitting on dedicated Gradient woofers and Gradient crossover. ONIX Grandmaster speaker cables to QUAD panels, Esoteric Ultrapath cables to woofers. Tara Phase 2 TFA speaker cables. Kimber Kable 8 Tc, Arum Cantus Leisure SE 2 two-way monitors, AAD E-8 150 watt self powered subwoofer.

Accessories

Islatrol industrial 20amp.mains line conditioner with an additional one amp. version in series with an isolation transformer supplying power to digital components. Alpha Core Balanced power transformer, Richard Gray's RPG SubStation, Audio Power PE-1 Power Enhancer, Ferrite blocks on all interconnects and line cords, Room Tunes corner/ceiling panels, trio of Argent Roomlens, Gryphon diffusion panels, VPI Magic Bricks, four pairs Monster interconnect cables, Nordost Red Dawn, Audio Research Litzline, Wireworld Eclipse-2, Chord Silver Siren interconnects, Audiobahn 1/2 meter digital, Eichmann series 2 interconnects with "Bullet" RCA plug's, Wireworld 10 gauge AC power cord, 3 home made 12 gauge IEC power cords, Radio Shack SPL meter, Rives Audio Test CD, and a comfortable chair.