



Epos ES11

Epos is a healthy constituent of the TGI group, and has thus joined other noted names such as Tannoy and Mordaunt-Short. It is a small specialist speaker producer founded by designer Robin Marshall, and was for many years a one-model brand with its ES14 unit. Bearing in mind the small size of the organisation, this speaker is unusual in employing its own design of high-quality units. The intent behind the design was simplicity and integrity, with the aim of providing minimum obstruction to the reproduced sound. At the same time, a fair selling price was also considered important, so that over-engineering was avoided.

While it can prove awkward in some systems or rooms due to a tonal imbalance in the mid-range, the ES14 has stood the test of time, and remains a respected speaker.

Now, with greater resources at his command, Marshall has created this smaller version, the ES11, at £300 for a pair. In fact it is set to do very well, since it encompasses the acknowledged virtues of the '14 with a more accessible and respectably accurate tonal balance.

design

Virtually a miniature at 10 litres, this model is reflex-loaded in the bass by a relatively large 45mm port ducted by 120mm. A high-loss nitrile surround is fitted, but the unit has quite a stiff rear suspension to help keep up the 'Q' value and also provide good power-handling. The latter is allied to the 32mm magnet pole, a generous size for the 120mm active driver diameter. This bass-mid unit is built on a 150mm chassis which has been integrated with the substantial mineral-filled polypropylene front panel. A similar rear panel is used and the enclosure shell is reinforced by a compression technique involving four massive coach bolts which lock front and rear together. Further evidence of sound engineering is the use of balanced-veneer 25mm thick MDF for the shell itself.

The mineral-loaded polypropylene driver has a natural acoustic rolloff beyond 5kHz, while the 25mm



dome treble unit is designed for this system, providing an extended downward frequency range. Extension is aided by a bored pole and rear cavity, with control exercised by ferrofluid in the gap. Bar a 15 ohm resistor across the HF voice-coil, the sole crossover component is a 1.5µF polypropylene capacitor to the tweeter. The bass-mid is direct-coupled to the amplifier, and sounds it. Its upper frequency range is augmented by a fixed phase-correcting nose-cone mounted on the pole face.

sound quality

Robin Marshall has a winner in this remarkable new miniature. It sets entirely new standards for the money, and has such depths of quality and musical integrity that it can be used successfully in audio systems well above its price bracket. Like the line B&W 805, it sounded wholly

believable on first hearing. The balance of virtue over defect being so strong that one has to fight hard to maintain a suitable critical stance. It is not just that the ES11 was easy to like – sweet, smooth and un-fatiguing – it was also highly rewarding. It showed first rate clarity and dynamics in the mid-range, with a treble to match. The two joined seamlessly, and one is reminded here less of typical speaker defects and more of the sort of minor errors encountered with good moving-coil cartridges or tonearms.

The mid-range sounded 'immediate' in a direct-coupled sense, all obstructions stripped away and with a clean mechanical and electrical path found from amplifier to ears. Some of the striking but artificial clarity present with good headphones was provided by this remarkable speaker. Such a fast, high-quality transient character could not be produced without the aid of an excellent enclosure, and the unconventional construction technique has evidently paid off handsomely. The bass was its weakest point, but even so was pretty good. At times it sounded a little slow and soft, yet it still retained qualities of tune-playing and the necessary power to balance the system. In this area, I am reminded of the Monitor Audio Studio 10.