

LOUDSPEAKERS

## Mission MX5

# Music is the master

**M**ission may be part of the AV giant International Audio Group (IAG) these days, but it remains a quintessentially British marque in character, with a unique approach to design and execution that has gained it ample brand recognition and a loyal following over many decades.

The MX5 floorstander is the flagship of the marque's all-new MX loudspeaker range, and also marks the return of designer Peter Comeau, whose portfolio includes the highly regarded Mission 780 and 782.

The MX5 (and the MX range as a whole) has been designed to find that elusive balance between price, performance and ease of use. It's a handsome, conventionally proportioned tower speaker boasting a substantially braced, bass-reflex enclosure.

The front baffle sports four drive units, all with individual grilles. Although they can be removed, the grilles are equipped with an integrated waveguide and are therefore meant to remain in place.

The driver array consists of a 25 mm silk dome tweeter, a 165 mm fibre cone midrange, and a dual array of 165 mm bass drivers. The latter three all employ a composite fibre combining soft pulp and acrylic fibre to create a material that is rigid, lightweight and resonance-free.

In typical Mission fashion, the vertical driver arrangement places the tweeter between the midrange and the first of the two bass units in a D'Appolito-inspired configuration aimed at improving time alignment and, by implication, aiding sonic precision.

The two bass drivers operated in their own, separately ported chamber, with the midrange and tweeter located and ported separately. The ports are flared to reduce noise and come with foam bungs to reduce bass potential in acoustic environments where bass boom becomes a problem.

That said, Comeau claims the MX5s have been designed to be used close to walls, making positioning them less critical than usual. The foam bungs do assist in those situations where the speakers end up being wedged



## Vital Stats

into corners, which always over-emphasises bass response.

The Missions feature integrated spikes for efficient acoustic coupling, and a rear mounted terminal board with dual sets of nicely turned out binding posts for bi-wiring. The enclosures are finished in a choice of faux woodgrain veneers that look smart enough, and easy to clean.

As mentioned, the MX5s are part of a larger MX speaker family designed for both stereo and home theatre applications. These include stand-mounted monitors, smaller floorstanders, and a choice of two centre channels, with an active subwoofer still to come.

However, for this review, I ran the MX5s in a stereo configuration, using a Perreaux Audiant 80i integrated amplifier with both the finesse and the urge to fully exploit the capabilities of the Missions. Usefully, the Perreaux has a built-in DAC, but I also brought along my Marantz SA-KI Pearl Lite CD/SACD player to act as source.

Cabling was StraightWire Virtuoso between the speakers and the amplifier, with RCA-terminated XLO Signature linking the Marantz and the Perreaux. The MX-5s were placed in a free-standing configuration, about 50 cm from the side walls, and a good 120 cm from the rear wall of the AVSA listening room where the listening sessions were conducted.

I started off listening to the virtuoso blues guitar licks of Robben Ford and the Blue Line of 'Mystic Mile', and was immediately impressed by the snappy dynamics of the speakers. They sounded agile, with a powerful but articulate bass, a clean and smooth midrange, and airy, open treble.

They did a good job of translating the bite and attack of Ford's guitar, underscored by the muscular bass of tom Brechtlein and the high-energy drum work of Roscoe Beck, while allowing a clear and unencumbered sonic view of Ford's easy, almost laid-back vocals.

However, it has to be said that the upper treble could sound a little uncompromising, and would certainly not tolerate bright or flawed recordings.

Moving the speakers closer to the side walls, and removing the foam bungs from the

**Enclosure type**..... Floor-standing,  
bass reflex

### Drive units

..... 1x 25 mm soft-dome tweeter,  
1x 165 mm fibre cone midrange,  
2x 165 mm fibre cone woofers

**Bi-wiring**..... Yes

**Impedance**..... 8 ohm nominal

**Sensitivity**..... 90 dB (1m @ 2,83V)

### Frequency response

..... 40 Hz – 20 kHz (± 3 dB)

### Recommended power

..... 25 – 200 watts

### Dimensions (HxWxD)

..... 995x250x390 mm

**Weight** ..... 28,3 kg each

### VERDICT

Open, accessible and muscular sound that makes the music come alive. Beware of bright recordings, though – and careful positioning will pay dividends.

**PRICE**..... R7 770

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ports assisted in adding further substance and low-frequency oomph to the delivery, although I felt that some of the precision and dexterity of the bass was lost in the process. Certainly, some experimentation will be necessary to find the right balance in a particular listening environment.

The Missions managed to create an inviting soundstage with a pervasive sense of dimension, and enough space to let the scale and impact of the music enjoy free rein. Imaging and focus were pin-sharp, ensuring a pervasive sense of realism and sonic credibility to shine through.

The sound on John Martyn's vintage 'Solid Air' recording is much richer and more atmospheric, and the MX-5s were able to gather the full tonal harvest of this performance. The acoustic guitars had timbre and presence, and the low-frequency foundation was solid and resolute.

Martyn's almost murmured vocals, the

richly timbred pluck-and-strum of the guitars, the almost liquid flow of the vibraphone made the title track sound almost eerily real. The Missions managed to translate both the pace and the impact of the acoustic bass, while Tony Coe's breathy, free-spirited saxophone was perfectly represented, too.

Despite the richness of the recording, the Missions remained articulate and communicative, displaying a finely focussed sense of purpose. They managed to extract and present fine slivers of detail without losing sight of the bigger musical picture.

Guitar and violin duo Willie and Lobo sounded vibrant and real on 'Caliente', with the Missions making the most of the lively guitar, the haunting violin and the pulsating percussion. The speakers managed to recreate the presence and momentum of the performance, while creating a soundstage open and clear enough to allow even the most subtle nuances to come to the fore.

The MX5s weren't intimidated by symphonic works, easily recreating the scale and majesty of Mendelssohn's orchestral accompaniment by the *Bamberger Symphony* to the soaring violin solos of Kyoko Takezawa on her rendition of the *Violin Concerto Op 64* (on RCA Victor).

They were equally up to the task of recreating the electricity and musical heroics of arena rock legends Toto, performing live in Amsterdam. The seasoned rockers are at their slickest, larger-than-life best on this set, and the Missions did a fine job of capturing the full impact and energy of the performance.

The Mission MX5 is an adept all-rounder that combines satisfying tonal range and a penchant for open, expansive staging with good pace and precision. It fares well across a generous spread of musical genres, and allows enough lucidity to create a sense of fine resolution and vital attention to detail.

Positioning remains a key element of making the most of the MX5's talents (as is the case with most speakers) and it is less tolerant of bright recordings. However, given its price point and overall performance characteristics, this is a fine all-rounder that will reward good amplification and a decent source with believable and involving performances.

**Deon Schoeman**