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TANNOY AUTOGRAPH MINI

Retro looks and a modern sound

Andrew Everard finds much to enjoy in these tiny Tannoys, scale models of a very famous design

The Japanese are going to love these" was my first reaction when I was shown the Tannoy Autograph Mini speakers, the smallest design in the company's Prestige range. Far Eastern hi-fi enthusiasts of the "valves and vinyl" persuasion have long adored the older Tannoy models, with their dual concentric drivers, horn-loading and cabinet designs rooted in the 1950s: visitors to the factory in Scotland are amazed that these speakers are still hand-built there for export.

But put these speakers in the average Tokyo apartment and they are, to say the least, a bit on the big side. I remember visiting one Japanese audiophile who had a pair in classic toe-in formation, except the outer edges of the cabinets were all but touching the walls and there was only a foot or two of space separating the two!

So I reckon Tannoy has hit the nail on the head with the latest addition. The £1250-a-pair Autograph Mini speakers look just like the famous 1954 design from which they take their name but are just 34.5cm tall, with everything else in proportion. And that means a scaled-down version of the "driver-within-a-driver" Dual Concentric technology that's been a hallmark of Tannoy's Prestige speakers for decades.

In the Autograph Mini we have a 10cm treated paper cone mid/bass unit, in the throat of which sits a 19mm titanium dome tweeter, its dispersion controlled by a version of Tannoy's Tulip WaveGuide. A rear port tunes the bass, allowing a frequency response of 68Hz-54kHz, and the construction of the hexagonal cabinet combines birch



The same, but smaller: perfect retro looks



The little Tannoys are best on stands but will work well on a desktop or open shelving

ply with hardwood veneers and mouldings, the grille cloth and trim in the oatmeal colour found on the bigger Prestige models. Completing the design is a high-quality crossover and silver-plated internal wiring from van den Hul.

PERFORMANCE

First impressions of the Autograph Minis are very favourable, and the overall feel of the product is of something very cute indeed.

You're likely to break into a smile when unpacking the speakers and setting them up – I know I did.

The Minis are at their best used on hefty, well damped stands, clear of side and rear walls, with sufficient toe-in to point them straight at the listening position, and what is clear very quickly is just how sweet and clean they sound. True, there isn't the low-end extension you'd expect from a full-size Autograph or Westminster Royal, which are a tad larger and use slightly bigger drive units – a 38cm in the Westminster! – but the integration is never in question. By the standards of

smaller speakers the Minis have bass that's both well weighted and taut, meaning that (in smaller rooms at least) they can deliver a very persuasive sense of instrumental or orchestral scale.

But the most appealing aspect of their sound is carried over from the rest of the Prestige range: the beautifully judged stereo imaging and sense of the music being free of the speakers that's typical of the combination of drive-unit technology and cabinet design. There's a smooth, organic quality that's a long way from the upfront, forward sound of more conventional "bookshelf" designs, and instruments and voices have the same unforced, natural feel, while at the same time the speakers offer excellent insight into phrasing and vocal or instrumental technique.

For the dedicated Tannoy fan – or perhaps the owner of a pair of Westminster Royals looking for a miniature version for use in a second room – the baby Autographs have an obvious appeal, as much as a collector's item as a very serious hi-fi speaker design. 🎧

TANNOY AUTOGRAPH MINI

Type Compact loudspeaker

Price £1250/pr

Drive units 10cm Dual Concentric, combining 10cm treated pulp cone mid/bass driver and 19mm titanium dome tweeter with Tulip WaveGuide

Sensitivity 88dB/W/m

Impedance 8 ohms

Recommended amplifier power 20-100W

Frequency response (-6dB) 68Hz-54kHz

Cabinet Rear-ported, made from 10mm and 13mm birch ply with internal cross-bracing, finished in teak veneer with solid teak mouldings

Dimensions (HxWxD) 34.5x31x13cm

Made by Tannoy Ltd, Coatbridge, North Lanarkshire ML5 4TF, Scotland

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