

FRIED MODEL R

The problem with these speakers are that they are, for the price (\$330 a side), so good that we expect too much from them. First the bad news. Their top end is very soft, even for those used to listening to Quad e-

lectrostatics. Their perspective is very distant (although we find the effect very pleasing on classical music). And on the best program source their transient response takes a back seat, but only to that of some full range electrostatics. Bass response is too heavy, but only if the speakers are not free standing; preferably on a pedestal, and away from walls, floors and corner.

Now for the good part. These speakers have the most precise stereo image that we have ever heard. And depth of sound is simply amazing, not depending upon reflected sound to reproduce this phenomenon as do many dipole designs. In fact, we have been forced to rethink our position on dipole speakers. It simply may not be possible for this type of speaker to be correctly phased. Consequently, their stereo imaging has to suffer to some degree. However, until the Model R's came along, we were not aware of how deficient dipoles were in this respect, notwithstanding careful room placement.

The Model R is the result of much impulse testing, pulsing speakers with a mixture of sound covering the audible spectrum (white noise). When such information is fed loudspeakers in a burst of extremely short duration, the designer is able to see what type of spurious response comes out the other end and at what frequencies. A speaker with little "overhang" will be that much more faithful to the original program, other parameters being equal. It has been suggested by some authorities that electrostatic speakers do not really have superior transient response over dynamic types, but, rather, have much more freedom from false resonances caused by box type enclosures and complex crossover networks.

Indeed, the Model R has a degree of clarity and inner detail exhibited by electrostatics. It is, in fact, the most open and articulate box speaker we have heard. And it doesn't share the fragility of many electrostatics. Furthermore, the R has the bass for which IMF products have become famous. The IMF Monitor most assuredly goes lower, but flat response to 30 Hz ain't bad. And the Monitor sounds like a box in comparison to the R.

It is too bad that the R does not have a more extended top end. We wonder what would happen if one were to place an RTR ESR 6 tweeter on top, crossing over to the 6 sufficiently high enough so as not to destroy that beautiful phasing of Mr Fried's. HMMMMM ...

FRIED MODEL Q LOUDSPEAKER

\$140 - suggested retail

The Model Q is the first Fried speaker to employ drivers that are not made of plastic. Nevertheless, the Q does utilize drivers (8" cone and 3/4" soft dome) which have been impregnated with a plastic latex compound. Thus Mr. Fried claims that he avoids the common "papery" sound of small box speakers.

The Q is an unusual speaker system which does not sound like most small boxes. But we found it to be one that was not easy to live with over an extended period of time. To be sure, the speaker has one of the quickest impulse responses we have around. Dispersion is remarkable and imaging is quite good. And bass response, a Fried hallmark, is unbelievable for a box that is about the size of the smallest Advent.

However, we discovered that midrange coloration was just too high for our tastes. There are several small box speakers around that can outpoint the Q in this area, many of them competitively priced. But we doubt that any of them can equal the transient response of the Q, and few can approach its bass response.

Perhaps we have been too hard on these speakers. At \$140, maybe it is not possible to design a speaker system that can keep pace with the other remarkable speakers in the Fried line. But we think the forthcoming Model B (which will be the Fried version of the LS3/5A, or basically the satellites of the Model H) should be the small Fried speaker to buy. Of course, it will cost more than the Q (around \$250).

For those in the market for an inexpensive speaker we think that the Q should at least be auditioned. Speakers in its price range tend to have more individual flavoring than many higher priced speakers. You may find the Q's colorations to be less offensive than some others. Each of us reacts perhaps just a little differently than the next person to various colorations. We value midrange smoothness more than many, no doubt - almost to the point of overlooking a very serious lack of highs and lows. The Model Q most certainly does not lack such basic necessities.

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