

Lipinski L-707 Loudspeaker

by James T. Frane



	Lipinski Sound Corporation
	6120 Massachusetts Ave. Bethesda, MD 20816
	www.Lipinskisound.com

The \$2,295 per pair Lipinski L-707 loudspeaker has red-stained, wood grain finish on all surfaces. It is the larger of their two speaker designs, both of which are two-way sealed enclosure designs. The L-707 measures 23.6" high x 9.4" wide x 12.4" deep and weighs 41 lb. The enclosures are made of 1" thick MDF (medium density fiberboard) with internal bracing to minimize unwanted resonance.

The loudspeakers are shipped very well protected in zipper carrying cases lined with polyethylene foam. These are, in turn, surrounded by foam beads in cardboard boxes. The carrying cases are an added benefit to those who move the speakers periodically, both for ease of carrying and for the superior protection they provide.

DESIGN AND PERFORMANCE

Three drivers are mounted vertically on the front baffle centerline of each loudspeaker. Two 7" glass fiber cone midrange-woofers are above and below a 1" neodymium ring radiator tweeter. The midrange drivers have rubber surrounds, die-cast chassis, and a magnet described as being low distortion.

The tweeter is said to have "super low distortion" and extra wide dispersion with frequency response up to 40kHz. It is recessed about 1½" so sound from the tweeter and midranges reaches the listener at the same time. The recess is surrounded by three stepped-back rectangular layers of Belgian foam. Lipinski states the foam is shaped for maximum accuracy of tweeter performance by minimizing edge diffraction.

Lipinski's website states that the lowest possible crossover frequency was selected to deliver the best transient response. Crossover parts are described as foil inductors wound on wooden cores, non-inductive resistors, premium audiophile-grade capacitors, and special flat, super OFC (oxygen-free copper) internal wires. Lipinski states: "Internal dampening [sic] is outsourced and precut to absolutely identical shapes and weights for the best speaker-to-speaker consistency. Lipinski speakers are all magnetically shielded for demanding pro video applications. Speaker performance was per-

separate cables in my system have not resulted in better sound.

The loudspeakers are designed to be placed on stands, cabinets, or shelves that put the tweeter at ear level for a seated listener. Stands are available on the Lipinski website, as are subwoofers to fill in the lowest octaves. Lipinski rates the overall speaker frequency response as 56Hz to 20kHz ± 1 dB (31Hz-40kHz ± 3 dB) with a sound pressure level of 90dB 1W/1m and impedance of 4 Ω . Their stated design approach with these speakers is to use a "sealed enclosure tuned for the best impulse response rather than strive for low-end extension." They believe vented enclosures do not have the same accuracy as their sealed enclosure design.

The speakers are offered with two grille choices. One covers the entire front baffle, while the other covers only the mid-woofers, leaving the tweeter exposed. You can select either grille design, although both came with the review samples. Or, you can leave the

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fectured using an anechoic chamber."

The back baffle has separate, five-way, gold-plated binding posts for tweeter and midrange woofers. Large nuts, each with three-finger-grip cutouts, are provided for easy tightening without tools. The design accommodates up to two gauge (AWG) wire, spade lugs, and banana plugs. The tweeter and midrange posts are connected with removable gold-plated straps so that you can use a single pair of speaker cables. I left the straps in place for this review, because past experiments running

grilles off entirely. Both grille types attach to posts on the baffle.

Lipinski has found that all grille cloths pose some restriction of high frequencies and states: "Our laboratory and listening tests prove that even the most transparent grill [sic] fabric causes high frequency comb filtering." Thus, depending on the décor, either use the grilles that expose the tweeter or remove the grilles for serious listening.

Because the tweeters are mounted between the midrange-woofers in a

D'Appolito configuration that controls vertical dispersion, the speakers must be on rather tall stands to put the tweeters at ear level for a seated listener. Given their 40+ lb weight, a sturdy perch is needed for stability.

The Lipinski website and the booklet furnished with the speakers makes the following statements: "The first step in proper audio reproduction is a well-designed room." They provide a PDF of a room depicted by their design team. Designing a room specifically for music or other entertainment system installation would be ideal, but many listeners may not be able to accommodate the details shown. Not to worry, because these speakers performed well in my more typical room. Lipinski then states: "Once you have a solid room, there are other rules that enable good sound reproduction" and proceeds to address matching components in a sound system, including amplification, cables, and using stands of the correct height. Lipinski designs and custom-manufactures 36" tall stands for their speakers.

I placed the speakers 9½' apart and each 9½' from the listening position. The Lipinski website shows their ideal audio-video room, and positioning info is included. Their site also includes a photo with the speakers on an ear height shelf facing a couch. Moving the Lipinskis to slightly different positions and orientations made some discernible differences; aiming them directly at the listening position was best. The closest sidewall was 5' and the distance to the wall behind the speakers was slightly over 4'.

LISTENING TESTS

I auditioned them with a wide variety of music and made a few comparison tests between them and my floor-standing Thiel CS 2.4 speakers using my ADC SS-525X 2/3-octave spectrum analyzer. The calibrated mike was at ear height at the listening position. Sources were pink noise and the Sheffield A2TB Test Disc. I found that from about 50Hz and up,

the Lipinskis were reasonably flat and were down a measured 8dB at 40Hz, dropping off below that. Because both drivers and enclosure are smaller than the Thiels, it was reasonable that the Lipinskis did not go as deep. You can compensate for this with a properly located subwoofer having an adjustable low cutoff frequency.

The Lipinskis reproduced sounds—including textures and timbres—accurately. Male and female voices came through with naturalness. Instruments sounded as they should. Details, depth, and spaciousness were all good.

The single greatest difference between the Lipinskis and my larger—and nearly twice as expensive—Thiels was the sound staging and depth. The Thiels were better in this area, projecting a wider and deeper soundstage. A typical example was Julie London's "Cry Me a River" from *The Best of Julie London* (Capitol/Rhino R2 70737). The stage width was from speaker to speaker with the Lipinskis and some sense of depth.

With the Thiels, Julie was at the center of a wide stage that extended beyond the speakers. Depth was greater and there was more of a three-dimensional presence. Instruments were spread behind her. Lipinski details and timbre were good and differences in recording and mixing quality were identifiable between examples of the same song/artist from different labels. Such differences show up only with very good speakers, demonstrating the quality of the Lipinski speakers.

Lester Young's "Sometimes I'm Happy" from *Lester Young Jazz Masters 30*

(Verve 314 521 859-2) sounded good on both sets of speakers, but I found the Thiels to have a little more spacious sound. Byron Janis' *Schumann Piano Concerto in A Minor, Op. 54* with the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra (Mercury Living Presence 432 011-2) was a slight bit wider on the Thiels with a little more spaciousness. Another factor in these comparisons is that the Thiels and Lipinskis are different sizes and designs and could not occupy the same space. I positioned both sets of speakers the same distances from the wall behind them, and as close as possible to the same distances from sidewalls and the centered listening position.

The Lipinskis are different in many respects from my Thiels, but are nonetheless very good speakers. Living in "earthquake country," I prefer floor-standing speakers, but that is not necessarily a criterion for good sound. When purchasing any sound equipment, you should listen to equipment using music with which you are familiar and make comparisons at the same volume level. There is perhaps little that is as subjective as the sound of speakers. In addition, the listening room is an integral part of the sound of speakers.

The Lipinskis are solidly constructed with apparent well-thought-out design and quality craftsmanship. I believe they represent a good value. My wife and I found them to have more visual appeal with either of the two types of grilles in place compared with no grilles. Although both types of grilles have foam lining the inner edges to minimize edge diffraction (redirection of the sound), I thought the sound was slightly better with the grilles that did not cover the tweeters or no grilles, given a good recording.

Solid construction, good value, and excellent sound make for an attractive combination. You will need speaker stands or other means to elevate them off the floor to put the tweeters at the listener's ear height. If you are in the market for speakers in this price range, the Lipinski L-707s should be on your audition list. **rr**

Associated Equipment

- Bryston BP25 preamp and SST 4B power amplifier
- Thiel CS 2.4 speakers
- Thorens TD320 Mk III turntable with Grado Reference
- Platinum and Clear Audio Aurum Beta phono cartridges
- Grado PH-1 phono preamp
- Sunfire True Subwoofer Super Junior (not used for speaker comparisons)
- Sony CDP-XA-2ES CD player
- Magnum Dynalab MD100 FM tuner
- Kimber 8TC speaker cables
- Bryston balanced interconnect cables (preamp to amp)
- Vampire and WireWorld unbalanced (RCA) interconnects



Reliable Reviews

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The NHT/sub proved my point above. The full and powerful bass gave the verb a reason for being, so that the experience was like being in a big Gothic cathedral. This is probably what Craig Dorian wanted this recording to sound like.

The subwoofer wasn't well integrated with the Guru (I had been warned not to try this at home; I hope the Norse god Thor doesn't spray rally-track mud in my eye for the transgression), so the added bass didn't really help the recording.

The NHT/sub combo was best on this recording.

Nowell—Riu, Riu, Chiu (Sampler 8606)—Wow. The Gurus had tremendous presence without any edginess. All these treble-focused instruments (flute, hammered dulcimer, tambourine) sound close up and natural. Hand claps and wood case raps sound completely natural.

The Aperions were different but equally valid. Not quite as forward, but a little mellower.

The NHT/sub was like the Aperions but even better, which is a tribute to the NHT sats because the subwoofer wasn't doing anything.

Thus, the Gurus and sub sounded exactly like the Gurus alone.

Hard to pick a winner here. Let's call it a tie between the Gurus and the NHTs.

LEDR and Depth Tests (Chesky JD37)—All four setups were similar on the Up, Over, Lateral, and Depth tests, except that the sound on the Gurus stayed well above the speakers, and the Aperions did an unusually good job of distinguishing between the furthest distances (12' versus 9').

CONCLUSION

I started out comparing the Guru QM10s to early Saab rally cars, which implies that they excel in a narrow category but wouldn't do as daily drivers. Yet, as I tote up the score, the Gurus won or tied on every selection but one. So what don't they do exceedingly well?

The blue light on the Holst recording suggests that they aren't the best choice

for heavy metal, the loss on the Dorian CD shows they can't do highly reverberant bass-heavy works with pipe organ or full orchestra, and the designer's correct admonition to avoid subwoofers means they won't fit in with a home theater. [Well, sending out such signals have not been my intention. On the contrary, they do work excellently in a home theater—if used with a good pair of subwoofers, or even better—the coming Guru bass modules made for them. If they are used together with a single, and less than superb subwoofer, they will still perform excellently, but the subwoofer will not.—Ingvar Öhman].

But on a wide range of two-channel music reproduction—from chamber music and jazz to tightly recorded full orchestral works—they are as unstoppable as the Stig [famous Swedish rally driver Lennart "Stig" Blomqvist, who was the inspiration for Top Gear's mysterious test driver—Eds.] in a Saab 99.

The only fly in the ointment is that the fall in the US dollar has caused a commensurate rise in the price of the Guru QM10s. At \$2,695 they are not cheap, and the optional piano lacquer finish is so worth it that you really need to figure \$2,995 (plus stands). The comparison speakers sell/sold for a fraction of that. But Dodge Darts sold for a fraction of Saab 99s, and I know a lot of Saab fanatics compared to zero Dodge Dart lovers.

So the Guru QM10s are not for everyone, but if my description of their strengths fits your musical taste, I highly recommended them.

Additional note from the manufacturer: As Mr. Koster writes in the review, we recommend avoiding subwoofers in the standard setup (one woofer). However, we are currently at preproduction stage of our own "base module" to be used with the QM10. We recommend using them in pairs and it is intended to replace the QM10 stand.

Erik Ring
Guru Pro Audio

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SOLEN

4470 Avenue Thibault
St-Hubert, QC, J3Y 7T9
Canada

Tel: 450.656.2759

Fax: 450.443.4949

Email: solen@solen.ca

Web: www.solen.ca