

THIEL SCS4 Loudspeakers

By James T. Frane



For the past few years, I've been the happy owner of a pair of THIEL CS2.4 floor-standing speakers. So, it was a pleasant surprise when THIEL offered to send me a pair of SCS4 speakers to review.

The speakers arrived packed in sturdy cardboard boxes with lots of polyurethane foam padding. The SCS4 is a two-way loudspeaker designed to be used full-range for stereo. After lengthy listening and measurement sessions, I'm convinced they are also well-suited for use as surround-

sound, center-channel, side, or rear speakers. The review speakers had lacquer-finished black ash cabinets, but they are also available in natural or dark cherry.

THIEL Loudspeakers
1026 Nandino Blvd.
Lexington, KY 40511
859-254-9427
mail@thielaudio.com

FEATURES

These speakers have a die-cast aluminum baffle to provide a rigid support for the drivers, as well as double-laminated 1" thick MDF (medium density fiberboard) walls and internal bracing to eliminate unwanted resonances. No feet are provided with these speakers. In the center of the back panel are two gold-plated binding posts that accept bare wire, spade lugs, and banana plugs. The post's

mounted vertically or horizontally, on a shelf or a stand. The woofer has a short voice coil and long gap to ensure the coil remains within the fixed magnetic structure of the speaker for constant control and to prevent distortion. The woofer cone shape reduces diffraction of the tweeter output. The drivers are mounted in the vertical and horizontal center of the front baffle.

A crossover between 1st and 2nd-order divides the output between tweeter and woofer and results in a cohesive full-range sound. Diameter ports measuring 1 1/4" are located above and below the drivers. The center of port to center-of-driver distance is 5 1/2" on the speaker vertical centerline, and each port has a 5" long tube extending into the cabinet.

The aluminum chassis drivers are protected by an easily removable metal mesh grille held in place magnetically. The mesh is so fine as to be visually transparent to a large degree. The cabinet front edges are rounded to prevent diffraction (a redirection of sound waves that can be caused by sharp enclosure edges in the sound wave path). The enclosures are 8.4" wide x 11.7" deep x 17.6" tall (21.3 x 29.6 x 44.7cm). Each speaker weighs 25 lb (11.5 kg).

The rated frequency response of the SCS4s is 48Hz to 20kHz $\pm$ 2dB with a sensitivity of 87dB and nominal impedance of 4 Ω (3 Ω minimum). The recommended amplifier power to be used with the SCS4s is 30-200W. The supplied owner information pamphlet states: "At least 50 hours at moderately loud levels are required before the speaker is performing near optimum. You should notice even more improvements after 100 hours of playing."

TESTING

I placed the speakers 36 1/2" above the floor on a solid cabinet, 12" from the back wall, with the centers of the speakers 6' apart. I used the speakers daily for a few weeks to ensure they were properly broken in. There were neither enhanced sibilants nor any hollow or booming sounds at any listening level. Removing the grilles

did not make any identifiable difference in the sound. Whether with TV, FM, DVD, or CD, the sound was always clear and natural.

The SCS4 size accommodates many placement options, but they should be at about ear level to enjoy the best sound because high frequencies are directional. You can enhance the total frequency response by adding and carefully tuning in a good subwoofer to reach the

“they surpass many speakers their size as well as some larger speakers”

knurled knobs also have wrench flats for tightening, but I achieved a snug connection using my fingers.

The driver arrangement is different from that used on most speakers. A 1" metal dome tweeter (similar to THIEL's flagship model CS3.7 speaker) is coaxially mounted in the center of a 6.5" diameter metal diaphragm woofer. The coaxial mounting is designed to provide correct time response whether the speakers are

lowest octave. The need for a subwoofer will depend on the type of music you like and, to a degree, the room reinforcement of the sound. The SCS4's reproduction of voices was very realistic—something not all loudspeakers achieve as well. The integration of tweeter and woofer was seamless, as was the blending and bass enhancement from the two ports.

SELECTIONS

I used a wide variety of music types and several movies plus television shows to audition the speakers. Actors' and singers' voices as well as all other sounds were reproduced clearly and naturally to the extent of the recording quality.

The following are a few of the CDs I used: Julie London's "I've Got You Under My Skin" and "Get Out of Town" from the CD *All Through the Night* (Jasmine CD 308) had her voice centered and realistic with good rendition of the spaciousness of these two cuts. Bass was adequately reproduced. "At Last" from *The Best of Etta James* (MCAD-11953) had a smooth melding of vocal and backup orchestra with a solid bass line in the background. You could easily imagine her on the stage.

The superb "Georgia on My Mind" by Ray Charles (Dunhill DZS036) had the depth and feeling over the wide-spread stage of this recording. His voice was very natural, and the background singers were realistically set in the background. "Unchain My Heart" from the same CD has a little deeper bass than is fully reproduced with the SCS4s, but you would likely notice this by comparison with much

larger speakers, such as my Thiel CS2.4 speakers.

Allegro from Johannes Brahms' "Quartet for Piano and Strings, Op. 25," performed by Murray Perahia and Members of the Amadeus Quartet (CBS MK 42361) had the right separation and location of instruments. There was a depth, three-dimensionality, and musicality to put the listener at the performance. Gerry Mulligan's "The Lady is a Tramp" from his live performance *In Paris* album, Volume 2 (BMG/RCA Victor/Disques Vogue 09026-68212-2) was reproduced with all of the spaciousness and feeling of a live recording. Instrument locations, timbre, tone, and depth took me to the performance—a great recording done justice by these speakers.

These recordings were a small sampling of the tunes I enjoyed with the SCS4 speakers. The speakers were never fatiguing, harsh, off key, or lacking depth, and they surpass many speakers their size as well as some larger speakers. Fans of organ music will find the lower registers diminished or lacking, but most music was complete and enjoyable through these speakers. They compared quite well with my favorite small speakers for over the last decade—the Mach One Acoustics M-Two speakers, which, unfortunately, are no longer produced. I would not be displeased with the SCS4 speakers as part of my home theater system.

Home Theater System Used

Carver CT26V tuner-preamp,
Carver TFM-55X power amp,
Sony SLV-370P Progressive Scan DVD player/VCR,
Mach One Acoustics M-Two speakers,
Kimber 4PC speaker cables,
Vampire and WireWorld interconnects.



AC-Regenerator: The quickest, cheapest, most effective way to upgrade:

This AC Regenerator rectifies AC into DC, and then, through a 150 Watt Power amplifier, converts the DC back into a pure sine wave (AC), with 1: frequency selections at 50, 60, 120, 400 Hz.

2: voltage steps at 1 volt/step from 110 to 120 volt (or 220 to 240v)

Regular \$850
Introductory special \$599
Valid through the end of December 2009

Monarchy Audio Inc.
S. San Francisco, California 94080
Website: monarchyaudio.com
Email: monarchy@earthlink.net
Tel: 650 873 3055

"Most Wanted Component of the Year"www.stereotimes.com

"... elevating the performance of every component"....affordableaudio.org