

# AVI Pro-Nine Plus

A revised crossover helps set a new standard for AVI's speakers

PRICE	£800/pair
SUPPLIER	AV International
CONTACT	01453 752656

**The Pro-Nine has** been revised since Ivor Humphreys' July '01 review, with an increase in the enclosure to 12 litres and a redesigned crossover for which extended bass and a smoother midband are claimed. At only 340 x 230 x 255mm (hwd), and supplied as a mirror-imaged pair, the Pro-Nine Plus would serve as a, pretty deep, shelf speaker, sitting either horizontally or vertically. However, in truth it's more like a small monitor and sounds best well away from rear walls on a decent stand.

Finished on all six sides in cherry [pictured] or black, with other veneers to order, it's a 'plain Jane' design. The overall look is determined by the choice of stands — AVI recommends Apollo or Atacama, although the more expensive 560mm Tallis LS3/5A stands [*HFN* April '03] would complement it handsomely.

The asymmetrical disposition of drive units and 50mm front port I would find disturbing to use without grilles; but for once here's a speaker that sounds pretty much the same with them left in place. I could have done without the discreet logo at the base of the grille but that's a matter of

## TECHNOLOGY

An inert enclosure in 15mm MDF veneered on both faces, this is a bass-reflex design using a 100 x 50mm front-mounted tube port. The main driver is a flush-mounted Vifa 165mm curvilinear doped paper unit, with 25mm voice coil; tweeter is Scanspeak 28mm viscous damped fabric type. Crossover is second-order Linkwitz Riley (not bi-wirable). Sensitivity is quoted as 88.7dB (2.83V/1m), with a nominal impedance of 6 ohm, maximum SPL 111dB at 1m; phase is said to be better than 1°, and bass extension (-6dB) quoted as 55Hz. Amplifier requirement 50-250W/ch.

## KEY FEATURES

- Stand-mount for best sound
- Excellent soundstage; low coloration
- Benefits from use of powerful amplifier

taste (I once met a hi-fi buff who stuck Dymo labelling strips to his Isobariks).

AVI counsels against the use of spaced solid-core cabling, which I have in my DNM-based system. Such inductive cables, it's suggested, will affect the crossovers. I can't say that I experienced any problems with either DNM power amplification (PA1 monoblocks) or its speaker cable; however, Russ Andrews kindly supplied lengths of Kimber 4PR, and I also used Chord Odyssey 2, which won an *HFN* 2002 Award. Stout binding posts accept 4mm banana plugs or bare wire. The Pro-Nine Plus can't be bi-wired.

AVI maintains that dynamic peaks in music require high current amplification, and AVI's complementary 200W/ch Laboratory Series Integrated [*HFN* June '03] was principally used for the test. The stands were the Russ Andrews Torlyte type, now custom-made (at a price); small flattened blobs of Blu-Tack were applied as an interface. Top-plate spikes aren't recommended.

The Pro-Nine speakers might be set with tweeters inwards or outwards: a point that ought to be more fully addressed in the instruction sheet. The company says that when using the Pro-Nines in smaller rooms the tweeters should be innermost to reduce unwanted reflected sound from adjacent side walls, but one should certainly experiment — even with 1.5m clearance from the room corner and with 750mm behind, I found having the tweeters innermost added focus and, for some reason, weight to the soundstage.

Straight from the carton these speakers showed that AVI has perfected the tonal balance (this is a better design than the larger-volume Biggatron Red Spot [*HFN* April '01]). Running-in is best done — for any new speaker — with the cabinets face-to-face and connected with one channel out of phase; Reference Recordings has a suitable CD burn-in track on RX-1000, but if you play its digitally edited 'hand clap' track in this manner you find the sound almost nulls, so phase-coherent is the Pro Nine Plus.

The phase-coherence, seamless transition between drivers, and natural balance mean that the Pro-Nine Plus creates deep, sharply defined soundstages: the instruments 'sit' in space, and the soft, inner detail registers in orchestral works



AVI's revised ported two-way, the Pro-Nine Plus comes in a choice of real wood veneers

just as it would in the concert hall; ambient settings are also accurately portrayed.

The extraordinary articulation of the Pro-Nine Plus depends on its partnering equipment. The musicality of my DNM shone through, in spite of its power limitations; but with, say, piano at realistic levels, the AVI Integrated added weight and authority — Pierre-Laurent Aimard's Teldec recording of Messiaen's *Vingt Regards* for piano contains some real torture tracks.

The women's choir with orchestra (including bells) in Arvo Pärt's *Como Cierva Sedienta* (ECM 1795) showed the different effects with Chord and Kimber cables: a softer sound with the latter; both equal in defining the performing space; but the Odyssey 2 slightly brighter — for example, with high, loud voices. With, say, harpsichord, the Odyssey gave a more tangible depth.

If there's a downside to the Pro-Nine Plus, it's that it's unforgiving of poor source material. With the (original) Quad Electrostatics in my system most things sound tolerable, although if soundstage depth is a criterion they're completely surpassed by the Pro-Nine Plus. This is AVI's best speaker to date, by some way, and deserves almost unreserved recommendation.

**WORDS CHRISTOPHER BREUNIG**