

Hi-fi News & Reviews

EPOS EPIC 1

Compact speakers defy their size with a big, fast sound

The smallest model in a new range from the British speaker brand has **James Vesey** liking what he hears

The Epos speaker brand has been with us for many years now, and has justifiably gained itself a reputation for combining fine sound and value for money.

Founded in 1983, the brand has been through several sets of hands, and in 1999 was bought by Mike Creek, who'd worked with the Epos speakers for a while in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Epic, its latest range, comprises three models: the Epic 1 "bookshelf" model we have here, the larger Epic 2 standmounter, and the Epic 3 floorstanding design.

The speakers have a highly innovative design. In place of the conventional front baffle onto which speaker grilles can be clipped, leaving fixing points visible when it's removed, there's a sub-baffle sitting flush with the edges of the enclosure.

This can be removed by pushing a special tool, provided with the speakers, through a hole in the rear of the cabinet. With this off, the grilles can now be fitted, and they too

fit flush with the cabinet edges, giving the speakers a pleasingly "finished" look whether used grilles-on or "naked". However, the changes here are more than just cosmetic: Epos says the new models "bear little similarity to earlier models", and that this "more sensitive and bolder sounding speaker range...redefines the benchmark for what can be achieved with modern materials and computer-aided design."

New drive units are used throughout, the £325/pr Epic 1 having a 25mm soft-dome tweeter and 15cm polypropylene-cone mid/bass unit. The speaker is compact, at just 31cm tall, and is designed to be used close to a rear wall, with just 10cm minimum clearance. That makes it a true bookshelf, in that you could actually use it on bookshelves without compromising performance.

The speakers are finished in a vinyl wrap – cherry or black ash – over 18mm MDF, and the quality of finish is very good indeed. It would be churlish to complain about the lack of real wood veneers at this level, especially when the little Epics look so classy.

There's a bass-tuning port to the rear, plus biwireable terminals, and – well, that's about it: these are very simple, no-nonsense speakers, with 88dB/W/m sensitivity and 4ohm nominal impedance, neither of which should present too many problems to modern amplifiers. Epos suggests 20W as a minimum power requirement, with 100W as maximum.

PERFORMANCE

In use, the Epic 1s deliver, in the manner of Epos speakers of the past. There's that punchy, dynamic sound many used to love in



the company's classic designs, provided you use these little boxes with an amplifier able to make the most of them. I'd suggest something in the Yamaha A-S500 class as a minimum, but they'll respond well to an even greater expenditure on the electronics.

They don't have huge bass, preferring instead to stay within their limits and keep things tight and controlled, but in a small- to medium-sized room they do a fine job of conveying a very real sense of orchestral scale and dynamics, while treating voices and solo instruments even-handedly.

They prefer to be run at a decent level if they're to deliver their most open sound – but then that's true of all small speakers – and they only start to harden up if you push them to the kind of levels at which most of us wouldn't want to listen for too long. Again, that's typical of speakers of this size.

Yes, you could get a shade more detail by doubling your budget, but personally I'd rather have the sweet, smooth treble of the Epics than something more willingly provoked into spit or a metallic edge. And for all that sweetness, there's no shortage of "air" in the sound these speakers deliver.

To sum up, then, these are really rather clever little speakers, both firmly in the Epos tradition and yet absolutely up to date in terms of convenience and flexibility. I think the company may have a winner on its hands with this range if they're all as good as this. ©

EPOSEPIC 1

Type Bookshelf/standmount speakers

Price £325/pr

Drive units 25mm soft-dome tweeter, 15cm polypropylene-cone mid/bass

Frequency response 51Hz-25kHz

Amplifier power handling 20W(min)-100W

Sensitivity 88dB/2.83V/1m

Nominal impedance 4ohm

Finishes Cherry or black ash vinyl

Dimensions (HxWxD) 31x18.5x24.5cm

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