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# PMC twenty 5.26 loudspeakers

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# twenty5 Alive!

PMC's new transmission line loudspeakers hits the mark, says Jon Myles.



**G**etting strong bass from a cabinet is easy to precisely arrange with a ported loudspeaker. How ports work was successfully analysed a long time ago, put into a computer program – and bingo! Every loudspeaker today uses a port. But not PMC's twenty5.26 floor stander I am reviewing here. Instead it uses their advanced transmission line (ATL). Add to this the big dome midrange unit and you have a distinctively different loudspeaker.

Ports work well if done properly and best of all – they're cheap. Long ago the transmission line was researched, by using a model train to carry a measuring microphone along the line! Trouble is such a line needs to be long, making transmission line loudspeakers big, heavy and expensive, since cabinet work consumes most of a loudspeaker's build budget.

The idea is that the line returns information in-phase with the front bass unit, not out-of-phase like a port. In other words the transmission line adds to bass rather than cancelling it. To keep size down a line longer than a quarter-wave at 40Hz is commonly employed, with heavy damping to

forceful for home use. Here PMC have honed their unit nicely for today's world our measurements showed.

High frequencies are handled by a 27mm Sonolex soft-dome driver developed with SEAS and the perforated grille has been computer optimised so as not to interfere with dispersion.

The cabinet measures 1040mm (40.9in) high, but 20mm must be added for spikes. It is 192mm (7.6in) wide including the plinth bars and 439mm (17.3in) deep. Weight is 25kgs (56lbs). Four veneer finishes are available: Oak, Walnut, Amarone and Diamond Black. The slight back slope helps time align the drivers while round the back the one pair of 'speaker binding posts accept spades, banana plugs and bare wires.

### SOUND QUALITY

Connected to a McIntosh MC152 power amplifier the twenty5.26s immediately impressed. In typical PMC fashion they sound rather different than other loudspeakers – but have an innate ability to convey music.

Starting with The Jam's 'A Town Called Malice' they punched the

"Starting with The Jam's 'A Town Called Malice' they punched the bass out with startling quality."

alter behaviour – not ideal and with port-like qualities as our impedance analysis shows, but you get a different quality of bass – and often more of it.

To drive this line PMC have developed a g-weave 170mm (6.5in) glass fibre cone bass unit with rigid cast alloy chassis. Behind, the line stretches 3.3m or 11ft and exits through contoured vents close to the floor. PMC says these smooth air flow by lessening turbulence at the port exit, such vanes also being seen in lensed PA drivers. Look out of the aircraft window and may also see little vertical winglets at the wing tip doing a similar job.

A distinguishing feature of the 26 model however is its use of a custom built PMC 50mm soft-dome midrange unit. Such units are rarely seen in hi-fi but popular with studio monitors. They are known to be both projective and revealing but older designs suffered break-up at high volume and could be a bit too

bass out with startling quality. The midrange also impressed with Paul Weller's vocals being pushed out into the room with great delineation. Here it was obvious just how good the PMCs are – punchy, enjoyable and rather refined.

Switching to Nick Cave's 'The

**Two vents terminate the rear line, with Laminair contoured flow directors to reduce turbulence.**



**The rear panel carries a single pair of connecting terminals – no biwiring here!**

Kindness Of Strangers' the PMCs brought out all the magic of this track. Cave's voice was resonant, the backing rich and vibrant.

The electronic bass line of The Chemical Brothers' 'Block Rockin' Beats' (24/96) was authoritative and punched much harder than I was expecting. Yet it was never boomy or slow. Instead it had pace and agility – serving to push the track along at



**Dome midrange units push more midband energy into a room, giving a brighter, shinier midband quality and great insight. They also make images very specific. But are expensive and not much used in hi-fi.**

just the right speed.

With acoustic instruments such as Jimmy Garrison's bass on John Coltrane's 'Live At The Village Vanguard' I could hear the body of the instrument and the resonance as notes decayed. PMC transducers are often described as a musician's loudspeaker and I could see why here. The whole performance had a natural, realistic portrayal to it, Coltrane's saxophone soaring above the backing musicians and out into the room without ever sounding disconnected from the band.

The tweeter is incisive, having a slight brightness to it which works to bring out the detail in many tracks. However it is a long way from the midrange unit and sounded a tad divorced from it. Conversely the midband is softer without the forthright nature of some rivals.

It's a different balance to most loudspeakers at this price and needs acclimatisation perhaps. But listen over a longer period and this balance makes a lot of sense – the PMCs never proving tiring whatever music I played.

Also, these 'speakers go loud with little effort. Turning up volume on the crescendo at the end of the third movement of 'Beethoven's 5th' the power produced almost knocked me off my feet. The orchestra simply powered out of the 'speakers in all its majestic glory. Classical music lovers will love these loudspeakers for the sense of scale they can produce.

Timing-wise The twenty5.26 were supremely coherent and this means that the music it reproduces is easier to understand and enjoy

because your brain is not having to make any effort to hear through time smear.

**CONCLUSION**

The twenty5.26 offers a different and quite distinctive sound, shaped by PMCs professional studio monitor experience. Think controlled but powerful bass, a wonderfully open midband and obvious treble. It's a loudspeaker that punches out nicely, especially when volume is turned up. Characterful, but exciting and well worth auditioning I think.

**NOEL SAYS -**

I got to hear the twenty5.24 when Jon Myles reviewed it in our February 2018 issue – and loved it. The speaker brought life and dynamics to music. The twenty2.26 reviewed here has a midrange dome and it made for great insight. My only gripe is the tweeter is too prominent for my tastes and, being far from the mid, it's not phase coherent – making it sound divorced.

"Think controlled but powerful bass, a wonderfully open midband and obvious treble."

**MEASURED PERFORMANCE**

Frequency response analysis of PMC's twenty5.26 varied according to microphone position, our analysis here showing a slightly (10 degree) off-axis result, between the dome midrange unit and the woofer, that would be heard at seated ear height with the cabinets pointing straight down a room, not pointed in toward listeners.

The result is reasonably even across the audio band but tweeter output rises by +7dB at 10kHz so high treble is strong. The dome has some presence at

800Hz and it crosses over with little loss at 3kHz so its contribution will be obvious, suggesting well projected vocals and instruments.

PMC loudspeakers produce strong bass and the twenty5.26 large cabinet and vented bass system gave output down to a low 30Hz (green trace). The large area floor port (red trace) extended this down to 20Hz and its broad response suggests good bass quality free from resonance.

The impedance curve shows the bass line and floor port are tuned to a low 38Hz but port acoustic output (red trace) is relatively flat and even over a very wide band from 20Hz to 100Hz. The PMC will not have the bouncy bass of typical reflex ported cabinets; it is very different in this respect measurement reveals.

Sensitivity was reasonable, measuring 86dB from one nominal Watt of input (2.8V). Overall impedance measured with pink noise was a high 10 Ohms, due to the use of an 8 Ohm bass unit (most are 4 Ohms these days to improve voltage sensitivity).

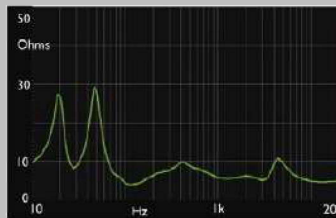
The twenty5.26 will have even natured and deep bass able to produce subsonics in a large room (> 18ft long). The dome midrange unit will be obvious but not overly forceful in delivery whilst upper treble will be obvious – possibly sharp at times. **NK**

**FREQUENCY RESPONSE**

Green - driver output  
Red - port output



**IMPEDANCE**



**PMC twenty5.26**



**EXCELLENT - extremely capable**

**VERDICT**

A projective loudspeaker that is no wall flower. Exciting and worth hearing.

**FOR**

- clear midrange
- good bass
- well finished

**AGAINST**

- bright divorced treble
- needs power

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