

# The PMC fact.8

## High Performance for a Smaller Room

By Jeff Dorgay

In keeping with my new mantra of “high performance sound for a small space”, I’ve made some significant upgrades to my living room system. It’s a small room, only 11 feet wide by 17 feet deep, with the standard issues that most audiophiles face; hardwood floors, glass coffee table, leather couch, etc. And of course in terms of room treatments, anything beyond a throw rug from IKEA on the floor, is out of the question.

The PMC fact.8 speakers retail for \$10,000 a pair and at 6” W x 15” D x 40” H, do not take up more space than small minimonitors on stands, but do they pack a wallop. One of my favorite speakers of all time was the Penaudio Serenades, which I used as reference speakers for a few years, but they would not work in my living room because of the side-firing woofers. But I loved the slim form factor and the Fact 8’s are almost the exact same size, with one critical difference. Thanks to the pair of 5 1/2-inch front firing woofers, loaded with PMC’s legendary transmission line technology (that is also front firing), these speakers are outstanding in a slightly cramped space.

The fact.8’s are svelte and understated, especially in the dark grey Graphite Poplar finish of the review pair. When hit by halogen lighting at just the right angle, they almost have a dark purple, eggplant cast. They are also available in Light Oak, Rich Walnut and Tiger Ebony. The cabinet construction is flawless and befitting of a speaker at this price point.

The fact.8 is rated at a nominal 8-ohm impedance, with a sensitivity of 89db/1 watt. They are a two-way design, crossed over to a .75-inch soft dome tweeter. Claimed low frequency response cutoff is 28hz without a specified decibel range. In the main studio, out in the room, when I ran a series of test tones, the fact.8’s were starting to run out of steam around 40 hz, but in my living room with more of a corner placement, I had solid output to 35hz, with output at 30hz, but somewhat diminished at this point. Remember, there’s no way you’d get this kind of bass from a pair of minimonitors.

We reviewed PMC’s smaller TB2i monitors in issue 22 and everyone on the staff was thrilled with how easy these speakers were to drive and the extraordinary performance in such a small cabinet. *(continued)*



When I heard the fact.8's at the 2009 Rocky Mountain Audio Fest in a relatively small room, I was immediately impressed. Though show sound is never the ultimate judge of any component's performance, it's always been my experience that something sounding great at a show will usually sound a lot better in my listening room. The fact.8's did not disappoint.

Built in the UK, PMC has been building both professional studio monitors as well as home audio speakers since 1990. They've based their designs around their ATL™ (advanced transmission line) concept. Though much more difficult to construct and tune than a standard ported design, the transmission line offers more solid bass output in a smaller space and also has the benefit of a very benign impedance curve. The effective length of the transmission line is 9.8 feet, and the horn lovers in the audience know what you can accomplish with a long horn and a small speaker.

The fact.8's are easy to drive with tube or solid-state amplification and though the majority of my listening was done with the darTZeel amplifier, I achieved excellent synergy with the Octave V-40 integrated as well as my Luxman L-590A II. The fact.8's have a neutral enough character that you can easily tailor the overall sound balance of your system by picking the amplifier that suits you best. Want to go a little more romantic? Your favorite tube amplifier should do the trick. Those wanting neutral and powerful will be just fine with the solid-state amplifier of your choice and you can easily split the difference with a class-A solid-state amplifier like the Luxman. It's all good. *(continued)*

### Setup

Playing along with the stellar darTZeel CTH-8550 integrated amplifier that we reviewed last issue and the Ayre CX-5eMP universal player, I had a very compact yet robust HiFi system in my living room.

The fact.8's are very easy to set up, and are not terribly critical of placement. Initially, the speakers were used in my studio, where I had infinite speaker placement options. In this room, which is 24 feet wide and 16 feet deep, I got the best balance of bass extension and upper midrange clarity just under 8 feet apart, with a few degrees of toe-in, with the tweeters three feet from the rear wall and my seating position 10 feet back. The next goal was to see how much of the sound in this room could be achieved in the living room environment. Fortunately, even with a somewhat compromised placement, a little closer to the side walls than I'd prefer, I felt I was able to keep about 85% of what I heard in the treated room. The speakers were now about 10 feet apart (tweeter center to tweeter center) with more toe-in and the listening position was now 12 feet back.

### Man, I Love These Speakers

The fact.8's are one of those rare speakers that do everything well. They go deep; they play loud and have enough resolution to use with world-class electronics. In a smaller living room with the darTZeel amplifier, Ayre CD player and my Oracle Delphi V turntable with Soundsmith Voice cartridge, I had a killer system that fit tidily on one Finite Elemente Pagode Signature rack. High performance, nice and tidy with high wife acceptance factor.

The darTZeel CTH-8550 is rated at 220 watts into 8 ohms and over 300 ohms into 4 ohms, but my MartinLogan CLX's drove the darTZeel crazy, making it heat up like a toaster oven. Not so with the fact.8's, they ran only moderately warm, even when driven to punishing volume levels. When listening to Van Halen's Van Halen II, I played all of side one with the pleasure control on the darTZeel cranked up to neighbor annoying volume. The fact.8's will definitely stand and deliver if your taste in music is on the heavier side. Fortunately a glass of McClelland's and a quick program shift to Sonny Rollins calmed down my next door neighbor, revealing the natural tonality of the fact.8's in the process. Cymbals had the proper timbre and decay and Sonny sounded spot on.

The fact.8's threw a big soundstage in both room environments, but again I was impressed with how much of the qualities I was able to observe in my treated room in the living room with careful placement in the living room. If you love the pinpoint imaging that the best minimonitors offer, but crave a fuller bottom end to round the presentation, the fact.8's should be at the top of your list.

Especially with acoustic bass, the fact.8's had a great balance of tunefulness and speed, thanks to the small woofers. No one-note bass here, the bass response still has enough grunt to make the Pink Floyd, Genesis and hip hop lovers very happy, yet enough finesse to give Stanley Clarke's acoustic bass the proper texture.

What really makes the fact.8s worth the asking price though, is the level of resolution they offer. *(continued)*



**The PMC fact. 8**  
**MSRP: \$10,000/pair**

#### **MANUFACTURER**

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#### **PERIPHERALS**

**Analog Source** Oracle  
 Delphi V w/SME 309 arm and  
 Soundsmith Voice cartridge

**Digital Source** Ayre C5e-XMp  
 combination player

**Amplifier** darTZeel CTH-8550  
 integrated

**Cable** Shunyata Orion Speaker  
 cable, Shunyata Aurora  
 Interconnects

**Power** Running Springs Haley,  
 RSA mongoose power cords

When using them to evaluate a pile of CD players that we currently have in for review, it was easy to hear the difference between a \$1,000 CD player and my reference Ayre as well as the Ayre and a few \$10,000 plus players. But most importantly, it was easy to discern the subtle differences between similarly priced players. I had the same results with cables. When I swapped a few different sets of interconnects between the Ayre player and the darTZeel amp, the tonality changes from each cable were almost as easy to discern as with my main reference system. You don't get this with a pair of \$4,000 speakers. Everyone who had a chance to experience the fact.8's commented at how "immersive" the experience was and the ones that have had time with my reference system were always impressed with what the PMC's could accomplish in my living room.

#### **Conclusion**

If you want big system sound in a small to medium sized room, the PMC fact. 8 should be at the top of your list. They are easy to set up, will work well with whatever amplification you have at your disposal and are very attractive. The only thing they won't do is give you that last bit of bass grunt from about 35hz down, but if you're in a small room this isn't going to happen anyway. Highly recommended.

