



**"I don't believe in love"**  
A Flashback confession  
from Siouxsie Sioux

**Easy listening**  
Audio-Technica's ATH-R30x  
open-back headphones



# Hi-Fi Choice

**PASSION FOR SOUND**

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## SHEER BLISS

**PMC's svelte prophecy5 floorstanders are a cut above**

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Linn's Majik DSM network player

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**"ENERGETIC FUN!"**



**JBL's MA310 5.2-channel starter AV amplifier**



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# Good omens

The Prophecy range is the latest evolution in PMC's ongoing design philosophy. **Ed Selley** thinks it's quite the leap



**DETAILS**  
**PRODUCT**  
 PMC prophecy5  
**ORIGIN**  
 UK  
**TYPE**  
 Floorstanding loudspeaker  
**WEIGHT**  
 17.7kg  
**DIMENSIONS**  
 (WxHxD)  
 165 x 900 x 260mm  
**FEATURES**  
 • 27mm soft dome tweeter  
 • 125mm LTXL mineral cone mid/bass driver  
 • 1.79m transmission line  
 • Quoted sensitivity: 87dB/1W/1m (6ohm)  
**DISTRIBUTOR**  
 PMC  
**WEBSITE**  
 pmc-speakers.com

**B**ritish speaker companies tend towards a strong degree of consistency in engineering philosophies, but even judged by these standards PMC counts as impressively implacable. It is perhaps the strongest advocate for transmission line speakers going and one of its most enduring configurations is the compact two-way floorstander. By my own count, I have tested at least five iterations, noting the ongoing performance improvement each time.

At first glance, the prophecy5 is more of the same. The range replaces the 25i models (at least in passive form, they will continue as active models) and, at first glance, it's business as usual. A 27mm soft dome tweeter is joined by a 127mm mid/bass driver assisted by a folded transmission line that is 1.79m long; no small achievement when the speaker as a whole stands just 90cm tall.

That throwaway comment gives a hint as to the first significant difference present in the Prophecy. At the bottom of the cabinet is a metal extrusion that attaches to form the base. This is the latest evolution of the company's Laminair port, which is designed to control the exit of air from the transmission line.

## This is an impossibly hard-hitting speaker judged by its rather compact dimensions

Called LaminairX, it further reduces turbulence and drag, and PMC claims the result is a potential drop of 3dB in harmonic distortion; a pretty profound jump from a single change.

The benefits don't end there. The presence of this large metal assembly at the bottom of the speaker has the benefit of imparting mass where it's most beneficial and also improves the aesthetic considerably over the older Laminair port – which gave the impression the speaker sustained itself on krill. The smaller cabinet volume means the prophecy5 has a shorter overall transmission line than the equivalent twenty5.23i (HFC 473), but PMC states that the difference in low-end roll-off is negligible.

The crossover employed in the prophecy5 follows longstanding PMC practise of a high-order, steep roll-off design with a very low crossover point between the mid/bass and tweeter – in this case 1.6kHz. Where PMC has focused its attention with the Prophecy range is on the components involved in the crossover itself. Rather

than simply going for high-cost devices, it has focused on closely pair-matching slightly more prosaic (although still extremely capable) components in the pursuit of tighter tolerances and greater consistency. This process is undertaken by hand and PMC feels that the results are more than worth the effort. The board used is still a 'military-grade' circuit board with ultra-thick copper tracks and gold through-plating.

The drivers are familiar enough in size and general design, but incorporate evolutions based on data from the preceding models. The 27mm soft dome tweeter, with Ferrofluid cooling, has a newly designed dispersion grille that assists with directivity. The mid/bass uses an ultra-light, mica-filled cone material with a view to balancing rigidity, damping and weight. It is specifically designed to work with the revised LaminairX port and is now used in all Prophecy models rather than sharing duties with a larger version.

The Prophecy range has also had an aesthetic tune-up and the result is the most visually elegant PMC speaker I've ever tested. One thing I note about the prophecy5 is that it is still unmistakably a PMC speaker, but one that feels more domesticated and elegant. It compares very favourably with others of this configuration and the standard of build and finish is extremely good, even judged at the asking price. That price is interesting in itself too as refinements to the way that the Prophecy is built and the number of different parts used, means it comes in cheaper than the outgoing passive 25i models.

## Sound quality

In some ways, the aesthetics gently set the tone for the performance as a whole. Connected to a Cambridge Audio Edge A, doing its own decoding in partnership with Chord Electronics Hugo Mscaler running as a Roon Endpoint, the prophecy5 sets about doing some classically PMC things. The first is that, while it sounds pretty good roughly placed in the right position, the floorstander responds positively to a little effort in terms of placement; I wind up with the cabinets a little further forward than is typically the case and with less toe-in than PMC speakers of old.

The sound that results has qualities that I've associated with PMC speakers since the beginning. This is an almost impossibly hard-hitting speaker judged by its rather compact dimensions. The potent *Stony Ground* by Richard Thompson is underpinned by a kick drum and the Prophecy



The prophecy5 is a whisker over £1,000 more expensive than the Neat Elite Classic I looked at in HFC 511. Good as it is, it still has to give ground to the fabulous top-end of the Elite and I feel that the Neat's infectious sense of joy still takes a little beating. From here on, though, the PMC begins to score points in its favour. It's able to go deeper than the Neat, but with the same cleanliness and speed. It's easier to drive, better finished and slightly better made as well. I would choose the Elite over the older PMC 23i, but I suspect that the prophecy5 now has the edge.



gives it the weight and palpable force that you know would be present if you were in the room with it. The frequency response from this low point up feels even and it's populated by a level of detail that gives more than a nod to the company's professional heritage. This is a fantastic recording, packed full of musicians supporting Thompson who know their trade and the PMC perfectly shines a window on what they are able to do.

Precisely how this is done seems to have changed, though. Move from the immaculately recorded electro folk of Thompson to the rather more rough and ready *Electric War* by Little Barrie and Malcolm Catto, and the prophecy5 strikes a balance that older PMC designs can struggle with. This is an all-analogue master that captures that late Sixties effect and it's not really 'hi-fi' in the traditional sense of the word. The PMC manages to get to the heart of the songs in a such a way that keeps the energy and period scuzz, without ever sounding merciless. It's a very well-judged balancing act and one I'm unable to unsettle during the time I spend with it.

And do you know what? We haven't even got to the best bit. Even when listening to the active version of the twenty5.23i recently, there was still the slightest sense of air being moved by the transmission line. It was never overt as such, but with bass-heavy, high-tempo material it would still make its presence felt. The prophecy5 by contrast is clean as a whistle. It might be fractionally down on what the 23i can do in the same space with the same equipment in terms of out-and-out extension, but its performance with the gorgeous

*Thank You* by Late Night Final is a peerless combination of depth and speed. This is the point for me where all the notional advantages of a transmission line are hit without any of the negatives being present at the same time. I have generally leaned towards isobaric driver arrangements as my preferred way of extracting significant bass from a small cabinet, but this is good enough to make me seriously question that belief.

## Conclusion

These steps forward result in a very big cumulative leap in what you might associate the small form factor PMC to be capable of achieving. I admire that you can still identify traits that go all the way back to the original FB1 in what you hear, but in a speaker that moves the game on in every way while being exceptionally easy to live with and attractive to look at. PMC hasn't deviated from any of its keenly held principles in the prophecy5, but it has emphatically evolved them into something very special indeed ●

**Hi-Fi Choice**

**OUR VERDICT**

**SOUND QUALITY** ★★★★★ **LIKE:** Exceptional performance; well made; nice to look at

**VALUE FOR MONEY** ★★★★★ **DISLIKE:** Doesn't go quite as deep as its ancestor

**BUILD QUALITY** ★★★★★ **WE SAY:** A decisive leap in terms of performance, this is one of the best sub-£5k speakers on the market

**EASE OF DRIVE** ★★★★★

**OVERALL** ★★★★★