



Mini-T Bookshelf Loudspeakers by Bryston

Sound reproduction that rivals a live performance!

By **Roger Archambault**

Whoever says “mini” regarding these bookshelf loudspeakers is naturally in the presence of the Mini-T’s flagship “big brothers”, namely the “Model-T”. Neither the weight nor the size, and even less so the sound quality is mini as far as the Mini-T are concerned. At 42 pounds each (19 kg), they do require somewhat of an effort to be positioned. And with dimensions of 57,1 cm (height), 26,7 cm (width) and 25,0 cm (depth) —(or 22,5 x 10,5 x 10 inches) once again, you cannot really call them “mini”. The cabinet’s dimensions are easily understood when one considers that it needs to have sufficient space to place an 8-inch woofer (20,3 cm) as well as a mid-range driver of 5,25-inches (13,3 cm) and a 1-inch tweeter (2,54 cm).

A ported construction must undoubtedly help with its efficiency, which is relatively good at 86 dB/1 W/1 m.

As soon as you hook them up, one forgives **Bryston** to have named them *Mini-T* as the sound stage largely outruns the physical limits imposed to them. The first thing one notices is the depth and above all the precision of the bass. According to the manufacturer, these can reproduce frequencies down to 33 Hz (at -3 dB), and this, without having access to a real-time (frequency) analyzer, I can easily take them at their word. ALL the low frequency tests, which

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have forced other loudspeaker systems (that I have reviewed) to reach for a subwoofer, did not create any issues here. The contrabass concerto by **Erland Von Koch** (16 Bits / 44,1 kHz WAV) is of course very pleasant to listen to, with each note being very precisely reproduced. Even at those low frequencies, we succeeded rather well to locate the musicians. All of the musical pieces with which I entrusted them, were very well reproduced. Vocal performances, whether they be by **Michael Bublé**, **Josh Groban**, **Andrea Bocelli**, **Diana Krall**, **Faith Hill** or **Reba McEntire** (and I have a MUCH longer list here) were very moving. We can easily localize the singers at the front of the soundstage and they are well defined as are the musical performances of the background instrumentalists.

What type of music do you prefer ?

What is particular in regards to these loudspeakers is that they do not seem to have any "preference" as to style or type of music. We all know a brand or model of loudspeaker systems which seemed better suited for jazz or rock or classical music, or better for voices (especially feminine) or even those which had the power to bring life to quartets but which would greatly suffer when you presented them orchestra music or choirs with multiple voices. ALL that I have played on those *Mini-T* loudspeakers, regardless of the musical style or reproduction type — acoustical, amplified, choral, group, soloist, etc. — seemed to be specifically made for them. No apparent weakness manifested itself. It is rare to find such qualities within loudspeaker systems at this price range.

While listening to one of my favourite reference album, *Latin Café* by **Guitars Alive Trio**, the plucked cords of the classical guitars distinguished themselves particularly well with an excellent attack and a very natural sound. The musicians are comfortably placed on the soundstage and especially do not seem to be piled on one another. Going on to another recording at a higher resolution, *Uncaged* by **Zac Brown Band** (96 kHz / 24-bits), the music comes even more alive. We really feel as if we are with the musicians in the studio but without any closely related obstacles (for example, a wall or a window). The musicians present themselves in front of us without any auditory veil. The harmonics (*Goodbye in her Eyes*) float in the air and thereby allow the soundstage to widen and deepen at the same time. Once again, we hear well-reproduced instruments with solid harmonics that definitely help complete the illusion of live music.

Beyond offering a soundstage that goes further than the limits of their physical positioning, even more exhilarating is their capability to become completely transparent in the room. Effectively, the soundstage is so very well defined that it



becomes difficult for your ear to locate the loudspeakers. Their performance reminds me of another bookshelf acoustic loudspeakers set which is also too heavy to bear the nickname, which is the model S2 of the **TAD (Pioneer)** brand. A factor that distinguishes the *Mini-T* from the S2 (apart from the great difference in price) is that they are MUCH less capricious concerning their positioning within the room. Where the S2's performance was almost strictly associated to a precise position within the listening room, the *Mini-T* performed well regardless of their physical location. I even placed them at three different locations within my listening room without suffering any sort of performance loss. Their sound image manifested itself well whether or not my listening position was well located between the two cabinets. I always had the impression that the soundstage was well centered between the two loudspeakers, even when I would be positioned squarely in front of one of the *Mini-T*s.

Power

If one had to blame them for something, it would be their slightly low efficiency. With a power performance of 86 dB at 1 W on 1 m only, they find themselves in a category of those



loudspeakers needing a sufficiently powerful amplifier. It is what I discovered when I first tried to connect them to the *D7050* by **NAD** (the product review can be found within the pages of this issue). With an amplification power of 45 watts per channel (Class D), it did not offer enough dynamic power to really get the *Mini-T* dancing. However, even with an amplification which could be qualified as anaemic for these loudspeakers, one could already see that the *Mini-T* were offering something special. I could feel a good reproduction of low frequencies (but that lacked control) whereas the soundstage was still quite good. On the other hand, it seemed that the high frequencies were “fragile” so to speak.

As soon as I connected my preamplifier and my amplifier to the *Mini-T*, the music really started to come alive! The bass were more solid and better defined; the mid-range frequencies (specifically the voices) were featured on the soundstage and the fragility of the high frequencies for its part, completely disappeared. In order to be certain, I hooked up the RCA outputs of the *D7050* by **NAD** to the CD inputs of my preamplifier and played the same musical pieces. The result: everything was clearly confirmed. Take notice that a good amplifying source is required in order to bring out the many strengths of these loudspeakers.

In order to make sure that I covered as many amplification types as I could, I also used my noble *VSX-94THX* by **Pioneer Elite**. After a few well-selected musical pieces (rock, jazz and classical), I can confirm that a modern receiver succeeds really well in putting forward the qualities of the *Mini-T*.

Hook-up

Connecting the *Mini-T* can be done via “banana” plugs with the possibility of configuring them in bi-amplifying or bi-wire mode (I hooked them up using a “normal” mode). The binding posts are of good quality and securely fixed are linked with the help of gold-plated brass jumpers at the back of the cabinets (the material contents of the brass jumpers is however not given). The cabinet is made out of MDF material and can be covered with a coloured vinyl or natural wood coloured veneer finish at an additional cost.

In conclusion

The **Bryston** corporation gave itself two main goals in the design of their loudspeaker series. The first objective was to reproduce music in a natural and precise way and the second, was to insure that their loudspeaker could play at loud volumes and, as such, be

able to capture the wholeness of concert music without any distortion or dynamic compression. In order to achieve this, **Bryston** teamed up with another Canadian company, **Axiom Audio**, in order to benefit from their 30 years of experience in loudspeaker design and manufacturing (note: **Axiom Audio** is responsible for the manufacturing of the complete **Bryston** loudspeaker series according to strict Bryston specifications and standards).

One last **Bryston** specification was to build a high-quality loudspeaker which would be AFFORDABLE. It may be difficult for some of us to accept that a bookshelf loudspeaker at more than \$2,500 can be considered “affordable”, but when the sound quality of the *Mini-T* is compared against what some other “specialized” loudspeaker manufacturers offer, one can immediately see that **Bryston** is really giving us a good deal! Even when adding up the cost of purchasing a good pair of loudspeaker stands on which to place the *Mini-T*, these loudspeakers truly demonstrate a sound reproduction which can easily rival (if not surpass) the performance of floor standing loudspeakers at a comparable price point —and with a 20 year warranty from **Bryston**. Oh, well...

According to **Bryston** marketing, a “state of the art” audio system involves what some refer to as a “suspension of disbelief”. What this means: is that an audio system ideally must surpass the limitations of the recording medium and transport us in the concert hall as if at a live performance. The targeted goal by **Bryston** with these *Mini-T* loudspeakers is to offer to its customers a superior level of disbelief... Mission accomplished.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Pricing: 2,695 \$ for the vinyl finish and 3,195 \$ for the natural wood coloured veneer finish

Warranty period: 20 years, parts and labour

Distributor: Bryston Limited, Tel.: 1.800.632.8217;
www.bryston.com

Mediagraphy

Erland Von Koch, *Double Bass Concerto*, Sound of Quality, WAV 44,1 kHz/ 16-bits

Zac Brown Band, *Goodbye In Her Eyes*, Uncaged, WAV, 96 kHz/ 24-bits

Dianna Krall, *Embraceable You*, Linn 24-Bits Of Christmas, FLAC, 96 kHz/ 24-bits

Concerto for Flute, Harp and Orchestra, Classics for Relaxation and Meditation Disc2, WAV 44,1 kHz/ 16-bits

Clarinet Concerto (Adagio), The Most Relaxing Classical Album In the World... Ever! [Disc 2], WAV 44,1 kHz/ 16-bits

Faith Hill, *Mississippi Girl*, Fireflies, WAV 44,1 kHz/ 16-bits

Michael Bublé, *Cry Me A River*, Crazy Love, WAV 44,1 kHz/ 16-bits

Beethoven *Sonate 32*, Chesky, WAV 192 kHz/ 24-bits

Mozart, *Violin concerto in D major*, Chesky, WAV 192 kHz/ 24-bits

Dr. Chesky, *Dancing Flute and Drum*, Chesky, WAV 192 kHz/ 24-bits

and much, much more...