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Precision engineering

Tannoy has rolled its traditional technology into a tasty new range of speakers.

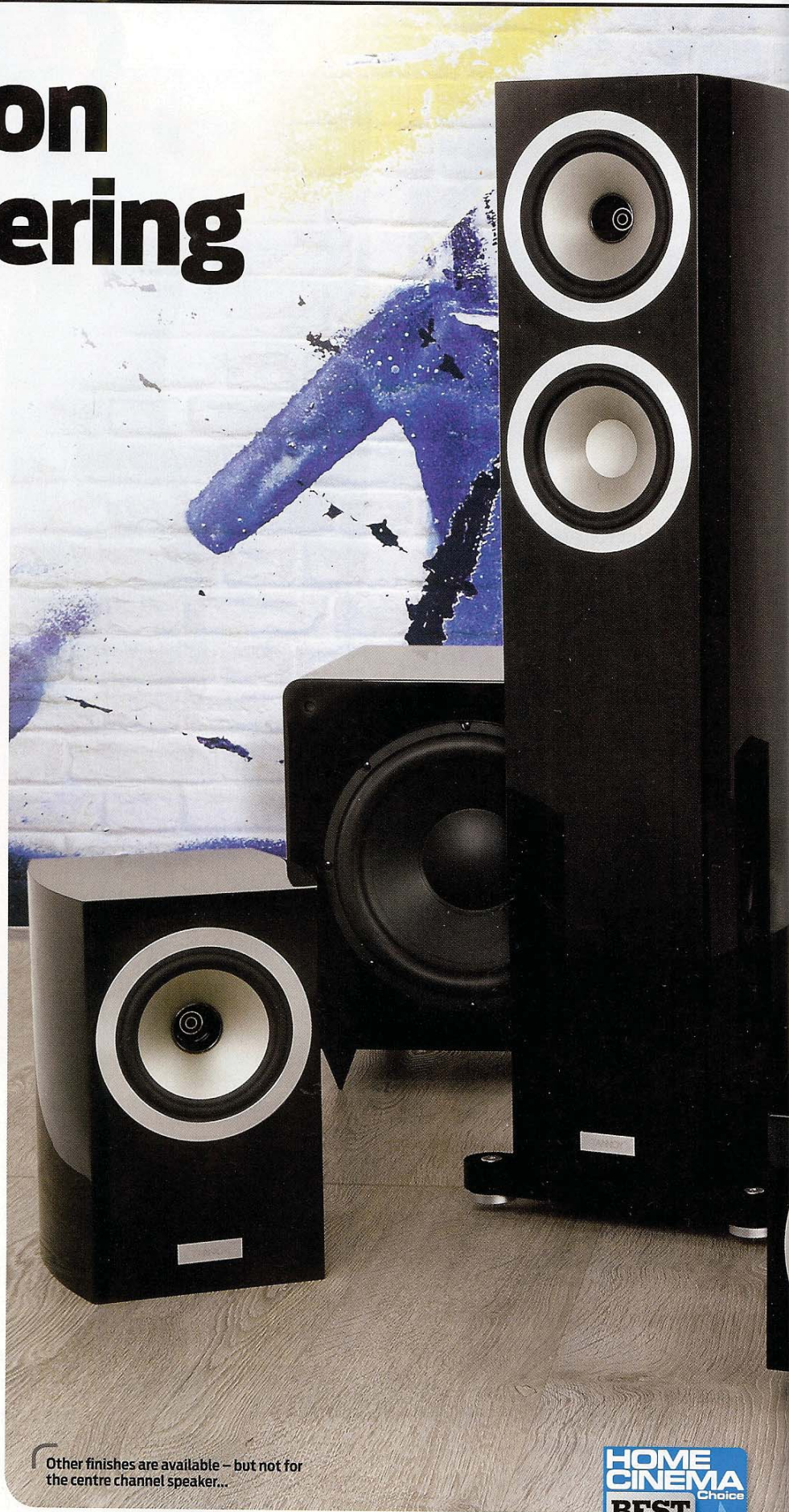
Ed Selley is very impressed with the results

OF ALL OF the big British speaker brands still in existence, Tannoy is perhaps the most unusual. In effect there are two Tannoys; the first produces capable and attractive budget and lifestyle speakers that are relatively conventional in design and appearance; the other produces speakers that are built around the premise of large, highly sensitive speakers that make use of the company's long-standing dual concentric system, where the tweeter is placed inside the axis of the main driver. Many of these speakers – the Prestige range in general – might look like they've dropped through a hole in time from 1959 but they are capable of great things.

Where things get interesting is where these two ranges meet. The Definition lineup has already featured in *Home Cinema Choice* and those large, elegant speakers left a very positive impression. Now Tannoy has taken some of the elements of the Definition range and created the smaller Precision series. Like the Definitions, the Precisions are a halfway house between the visually elegant side of Tannoy and the classic, high-sensitive designs of old.

Going round in circles

At the core of all the Precision models is an all-new version of the brand's Dual Concentric driver. This is a 6in version combining a 1in titanium tweeter in the throat of a wood fibre midbass driver. The latter has a metallic paint finish that, at a glance, might make the driver appear metal but it holds true to the traditional construction methods Tannoy employ. In the case of the smallest member of the range, the 6.1 standmount, it is the only driver in the speaker, but other members of the Precision family also make use of a conventional version of the same midbass unit, less the tweeter.



Other finishes are available – but not for the centre channel speaker...



**AV INFO**

PRODUCT:
5.1 floorstanding system

POSITION:
Between the Revolution and Definition series

PEERS:
KEF R series;
Monitor Audio GX series;
Acoustic Energy Reference series

These drivers are mounted in a cabinet that stylistically gives more than a nod to the larger Definition range. This combines very solid flat front and rear panels with elegantly curved sides – a combination designed to naturally reduce standing waves inside the cabinet. Tannoy has also added additional bracing internally.

Other tricks, like the Differential Materials Technology system used to couple the driver chassis to the cabinet, are applied with a view to further reduce resonance. In the case of the 6.2 floorstander (and the larger 6.4 model not reviewed here) great attention has been lavished on the plinth, which arrives coupled to the cabinet. It's a very substantial affair that allows for adjustment of the attached spikes from both the top and the bottom of the cabinet. In practice, the adjustment is easy enough from the underside, but those of you who live your life by a spirit level might be pleased by the above-the-line access.

Home cinema cavalry

Naturally for Tannoy, the 6.1 standmount and 6.2 floorstander are sold as stereo components – the home cinema-centric parts of our 5.1 package come courtesy of the Precision 6C centre speaker and the TS2.12 subwoofer.

The latter is not a member of the Precision range as such, having been around for over a year, but is offered by the brand in this

'The 6C centre is a serious heavyweight – you will need to give it a significant amount of room'

multichannel package (and another set that uses the smaller 6.1s for both front and surround duties).

The 6C is a serious heavyweight even judged by the standards of other centre speakers at the price. It shares the same cabinet cross sectional area as the floorstanders, and because Tannoy has decided not to make it reliant on a single Dual Concentric driver and has instead given it an additional pair of bass cones (one passive), you will need to allow it a significant amount of room. A supplied cradle at least aids installation on an AV stand.

The styling of the TS2.12 subwoofer is in keeping with the rest of the speakers – in as much as a big cube is ever going to blend in with curved-edge cabinets. This woofer uses the increasingly popular configuration of an active driver (here a 12in) partnered with a passive one, to give a greater radiating area. The former driver is motivated by a 500W

amplifier and the overall dimensions of the cabinet means that, even though it is actually the cheapest part of this surround package, it ought to be able to underpin the other speakers to good effect. We have auditioned it previously as a standalone product and found it to be superb for the £550 asking price.

The technology of the Precision range is undoubtedly impressive but there's equally good news when it comes to aesthetics and finish. The styling of the Precisions owes

'The sound is almost liquid-smooth from top to bottom – controlled, detailed and cohesive'

more than a little to the larger Definition range but the smaller drivers gives them more elegant proportions than their bigger brothers, and in the case of the floorstanders in particular, these have to be some of the best-looking speakers at or anywhere near the price point. The build is equally substantial and the finish is excellent as well – these are the kind of speakers that you look at and fall in love with immediately. Neat design touches abound, like the quintet of binding posts allowing for a separate earth connection.

The only slight oddity is that the ghost of Henry Ford is apparently in charge of the Tannoy colour swatch as, although the stereo pairs are available in high gloss and satin wood finishes, the centre is only available in gloss black – so that is your only option for multichannel, unless you're happy to mix 'n' match.

Ready to rumble

Placement of the Precisions proved easy enough. Although they are rear-ported, the energy from the bass ports appears fairly limited across all models and they all seem quite unfussy even when placed close to a wall. And with the speakers *in situ*, the news is almost exclusively good.

The Precisions have some aspects to their behaviour that is classically Tannoy. They are almost liquid-smooth from top to bottom, and present a soundstage across the front three speakers that is big and completely free from any apparent gaps. The crossover from front to back is equally seamless and the decades of experience with the Dual Concentric drivers makes itself apparent as well. The Precisions manage to produce a soundstage that's very even and free of pronounced sweet spots. Anyone sat remotely on-axis is going to be on the receiving end of a very convincing multichannel performance.



The gold-plated binding posts enable bi-wiring and a separate earth connection

This cohesiveness comes into its own when you select something like J.J. Abrams' sci-fi smash *Super 8* – still something of a master-class Blu-ray disc in terms of going from periods of almost total silence with only sparse details to full-bore moments in barely the blink of an eye. Here, the Tannoys are in their element. The moment where the sheriff is abducted at the gas station is seriously impressive: the calm of the night, with only the ping of the fuel pump to grab attention, is shattered with lightning pace – all hell breaks loose and the Precisions are comfortable with all of it. In fact, the relative sensitivity of the speakers lends them a speed that means that when they need to go from near silence to full tilt, they do so almost instantaneously.

Another of the benefits of these wood fibre drivers is that even under extreme provocation they stay smooth, controlled and detailed



The Precision series' Dual Concentric drivers feature a tin titanium tweeter with 'Tulip WaveGuide'



identical drivers employed across all models. Yet, at the same time, the Tannoys possess a sense of effortlessness. At no stage does their performance ever feel forced or showy – they simply take whatever material you present them with and make the best of it. I would never want to describe the Precision array as dull, but there is something wonderfully relaxed about its presentation that means it's superbly easy to listen to for long periods, compared to other speakers that can begin to tire with their puppyish energy. Music fans are therefore well-catered for, too. Both stereo and multichannel tracks come through with pleasing body and clarity.

By comparisons, criticisms are slight. Firstly, the Precisions are impressively sensitive but they are still fairly demanding on their amplification and will show up limitations further upstream. You'll want to match this £4,450 package with an AVR that packs a decent punch.

The other area where the system has to give some ground is the subwoofer. The TS2.12 is capable and can go impressively deep, but even set to a relatively low crossover I never felt it integrated perfectly with the Precision

'A very likeable and entertaining package – the Precisions are speakers that need to be on your shortlist'

cabinets. Yes, there are two drivers at work in the chassis – and the TS2.12 is surprisingly agile – but with the rest of the Tannoy cabinets offering such cohesion, it stuck out a little bit. Perhaps a more expensive design from a dedicated subwoofer brand would be worth investigating.

Likeable and entertaining

These are minor quibbles, though, and shouldn't detract from what is a very likeable and entertaining package. Overall, this 5.1 setup is able to cover the important bases. They are beautifully built and have a very handsome (black) aesthetic that should work well in most rooms you place them in. When you power up your AV receiver, they deliver a fantastic performance that is rich, real and extremely involving. And, as a true all-rounder, they are as happy giving a bit of a boost to Tuesday evening television as they are delivering a full-throttle movie night. When you consider their talent with music and their usefully compact dimensions (I'm ignoring the centre channel model...), the Precisions are speakers that need to be on your shortlist ■

– and the integration with the titanium tweeters is extremely good as well. It is effectively impossible to tell when one ends and the other begins.

Dialogue delivery

Tannoy's newest speakers also have superb tonality. There's an ability with voices in particular that is genuinely convincing and some of this is clearly down to the 6C centre speaker. It might be a bit of a big beast, but the weight and scale that it gives to the onscreen dialogue is immensely effective, putting living, breathing actors right there in your room rather than squawking avatars.

This system can leave even very ballistic soundtracks – and they don't get much more ballistic than the Arnold Schwarzenegger retro actioner *The Last Stand* – sounding spacious and real, with utterly convincing panning effects courtesy of the

SPECIFICATIONS

PRECISION 6.2

DRIVE UNITS: 1 x 6in Dual Concentric with 1in titanium tweeter; 1 x 6in midbass
ENCLOSURE: Rear-ported
FREQUENCY RESPONSE: 34Hz-35kHz
SENSITIVITY: 89dB
POWER HANDLING: 350W
DIMENSIONS: 283(w) x 1000(h) x 310(d)mm
WEIGHT: 18.4kg

PRECISION 6.1

DRIVE UNITS: 1 x 6in Dual Concentric with 1in titanium tweeter
ENCLOSURE: Rear-ported
FREQUENCY RESPONSE: 43Hz-35kHz
SENSITIVITY: 88dB
POWER HANDLING: 300W
DIMENSIONS: 224(w) x 330(d) x 257(d)mm
WEIGHT: 7.3kg

PRECISION 6C

DRIVE UNITS: 1 x 6in Dual Concentric with 1in titanium tweeter; 2 x 6in midbass (one passive)
ENCLOSURE: Passive radiator
FREQUENCY RESPONSE: 36Hz-35kHz
SENSITIVITY: 90dB
POWER HANDLING: 350W
DIMENSIONS: 585(w) x 237(h) x 256(d)mm
WEIGHT: 13kg

TS2.12 SUBWOOFER

DRIVE UNITS: 2 x 12in doped paper cones; one active, one passive
ENCLOSURE: Sealed
FREQUENCY RESPONSE: 21Hz-200Hz
ON BOARD POWER: 500W
REMOTE CONTROL: No
DIMENSIONS: 430(w) x 440(h) x 378(d)mm

HCC VERDICT



Tannoy Precision 5.1

→ £4,450 Approx → <http://tannoy.com>
 → Tel: 01236 420199

HIGHS: Refined yet potent sound; gorgeous aesthetics and sturdy build; mostly sensible dimensions

LOWS: Subwoofer not quite as capable as the speakers; centre is fairly large

Performance ★★★★★

Design ★★★★★

Features ★★★★★

Overall ★★★★★