



Home Theater Review

Like Oliver Stefan, Kevin Wolff and 57,029 others like this.

Follow 12.3K followers G+1 +2

HDTV-Video Source Components Preamps & Receivers Amplifiers Loudspeakers Media Servers Accessories Dealers **Forum**

AV News Blu-ray Headphones Projectors Home Theater Brands Education Slideshows AudiophileReview.com

Search HTR:

GO

Subscribe to HomeTheaterReview.com

MartinLogan Stealth Series Vanquish and Axis Speakers Reviewed

By: **Greg Handy**, February 29, 2016

4

28

166

230

2

G+1

[Subscribe to our FREE weekly newsletter](#) [Print this article](#)

HTR Product Rating

Performance

Value

Overall

Disagree with our product rating? [Email us](#) and tell us why you think this product should receive a higher rating.

Page 1 | [Page 2](#)

We often seek that perfect speaker, but at some point we should realize that the perfect speaker is dependent on the room in which it will be located. Some rooms just can't facilitate the speaker we relish, nor will it sound the way we imagine. So the goal should be to choose the best speaker for the specific room, and sometimes that means in-ceiling and/or **in-wall speakers**, also known as architectural speakers.

I happen to have a challenging room in my home that is also the most active room: the family room. A few years back, I did have a freestanding speaker system--**the Totem Dream Catcher 5.1 system**--connected in this room, which is a fantastic entry-level product. However, the form factor did not sit well with the wife, nor was I able to locate the right front-channel speaker in an adequate location. I wondered if an in-ceiling and in-wall system could satisfy my sonic demands while maintaining the interior-design requirements of my better half.

MartinLogan is probably known best for its electrostatic speakers, but the company has adapted some of its technology for the architectural speaker category, offering no less than four different product lines. The latest line, which is called the **Stealth Architectural Series**, is MartinLogan's most sophisticated flagship offering, and it consists of the round Vanquish **in-ceiling speaker** (\$1,399 each, shown above) and two rectangular in-wall models: the Axis (\$1,149 each) and the Edge (\$1,699 each). All of these models utilize Folded Motion XT tweeters, which employ thin-film technology to achieve low distortion in the upper frequencies. Additionally, the entire Stealth line benefits from bezel-less frames that are incredibly solid, one-piece aluminum units that house the black-aluminum, high-excursion bass and midrange drivers and components. Lastly, all of these models can be used for left, center, right, or surround applications, depending on your scenario.

Crossovers are made with polypropylene and low-DF electrolytic **capacitors** and custom wound **inductors**. It's all tied together by 16-gauge, high-purity copper wire on a double-layered, extra-thick circuit board. Thermal and current protection is included to preserve your investment. This caliber of detail and refinement is not typical of most architectural products.

Since my family room has proven to be such an acoustic challenge for me, I chose this room to give the MartinLogans a chance to prove their worthiness. For this review, I installed a 7.1 system consisting of five in-ceiling Vanquish speakers for the left, center, right, and surround back channels and two Axis **in-wall speakers** for the surround channels located in the back side walls. MartinLogan also sent along the **BalancedForce 210 subwoofer** and an **Anthem MRX 510 AV receiver** to round out the 7.1 system.

The Vanquish has to be one of the most unconventional **in-ceiling speakers** I have ever seen. First, it is enormous, coming in at 14.4 inches in diameter, requiring a 13.1-inch diameter cutout for installation.



WIN A M500MKII MONOBLOCK PAIR WORTH \$1798⁰⁰

RED DRAGON AUDIO

with WBT upgrade!

Let the most music through.

WIREWORLD[®]

CABLE TECHNOLOGY

Engineered for Reality™

A Soundbar with the soul of a High End System

FREE! 5 audio system 30% off for a limited time

Inspire5

UNIQUE SPEAKERS

Home Theater News

Origin Acoustics Debuts AcoustaSpace Landscape Audio Series

Overall TV Shipments Decline in 2015, But 4K Looks Strong

ATC Introduces Active SCM19AT Tower Speaker to U.S. Market

AT&T/DirecTV to Launch New Streaming Video Services

LG to Add GameFly to Its Smart TV Platform

Amazon May Add Live TV Streaming to Prime Service

Cary Audio Launches Direct-to-Consumer Web Store

Dolby Announces More Atmos Titles in UHD and Blu-ray Formats

Netflix to Add Second-Screen Capability

AudioControl's New AVR-9 and AVR-7 Receivers Are Now Shipping

While the overall shape is round, the aluminum speaker baffle is "A" concave shaped, protruding into the ceiling cavity, providing an angle to direct the tweeter and midrange drivers (one on each side of the ribbon tweeter) toward the listening position. On the opposing side of the baffle is one eight-inch aluminum driver, which points the bass frequencies partially in the opposite direction of the midrange and high-frequency drivers and partially down-firing toward the floor. Additionally, the Vanquish has two switches on the face of the speaker that allow you to contour the output of the midrange drivers, based on the location of the speaker, by focusing sound toward the listener while minimizing sidewall reflections. The switches tell the speaker which location the speaker is being used for--left, center, or right, for example.

Worth pointing out is the dressy paint finish of the exterior, a trait most other [in-ceiling speakers](#) lack. MartinLogan intentionally painted this elaborate baffle design in an attractive glossy black, providing you the option to leave the magnetic and paintable metal grill off. This would indeed provide an interesting look for the right décor. My first impression of this speaker, while looking at it with the grill off, is that of a [Darth Vader](#) mask. While that may not sound attractive at first, it gets my Badass award. If you were planning on creating a Star Wars themed theater room, you should really take a look at the Vanquish, which could also be used as an effects speaker in an elaborate [Dolby Atmos](#), [DTS:X](#), or [Auro](#) system.

The Axis in-wall speaker (right) is more traditional in appearance, and it consists of the same Folded Motion ribbon tweeter found in the Vanquish, with one 5.25-inch bass driver on each side of the tweeter. Due to the fact that this speaker can be used horizontally or vertically, the tweeter has the ability to be repositioned so that it retains a vertical orientation. Also, one of the two 5.25-inch drivers reproduces a larger frequency range, with more midrange response, and is intended to be installed closer to the listener's ear. The Axis includes a high-gloss frame insert, which really shows the high-end level of these speakers and provides the option to display them with the grills off.



The Hookup

I started by installing the front three Vanquish [in-ceiling speakers](#). The room measures 12 feet across the front, with a front-to-rear depth of 14 feet. Unfortunately, the media niche is to the far left of the room, as opposed to the desired dead-center location. As a result, I had to locate the center speaker off center to the room, since it is necessary to locate this speaker above the monitor. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise. Due to this unfortunate circumstance, the front left speaker and center speaker are located very close to one another, which completely contradicts common sense, as well as the instructions provided by the manufacturer. While I agree with MartinLogan's directive, in the real world, perfect symmetry is not always possible. I installed the surround back monitors in the ceiling as close to the back of the room as possible; however, various plumbing hardware prevented optimum placement. Luckily (as described earlier), the [MartinLogan speakers](#) are directional in nature; the drivers don't fire straight down. So, I directed their upper frequencies toward the back wall. My point here is that concessions must be made in real-world situations, when working with installed speakers, with hope that the outcome will be successful.

Installation of the Vanquish speakers can be challenging since they are big and heavy (16 pounds). Standing on a ladder, holding the speaker with one hand while simultaneously driving the screws that lower the C-clamps with the other hand, made for one sweaty and nerve-racking experience. The only reason I was successful is MartinLogan's magnificent removable handle, which allows you to grasp this beast in the middle of the speaker without damaging the drivers. I was so appreciative of this handle, I found myself muttering my gratitude to the designer during the installation. Without this feature, there is no safe way to install these behemoths single-handedly. Even with a second set of hands, the handle is beneficial. Before tightening the speakers all the way down, I carefully rotated them to aim the tweeter to the best listening position.

In retrospect, it would have made sense to choose a smaller [in-ceiling speaker](#) for the back surround channels. These channels don't require the sophistication that the Vanquish offers, so I could have used one of MartinLogan's other products from alternative lines like the [ElectroMotion EM-IC](#) or [EM-R](#). Not only are these speakers much less expensive, but they may allow for a more optimum mounting location due to their smaller size. Given the limited audio information directed to surround back channels, I would think this change could go unnoticed.



Slideshow: 12 Massively Failed AV Technologies



The Axis was a pleasure to install in the rear sidewalls. As I mentioned earlier, the Folded Motion XT tweeter can be repositioned by the user to maintain a vertical position. All I had to do was gently pry the tweeter housing off the main speaker unit, give it a quarter turn, and reinsert the four peg legs. Also, I had to be cognizant of which of the two bass drivers is the [extended bass driver](#) to ensure proper installation. I actually installed one of the Axis speakers upside down in error, but removing and reinstalling it was easy.

I connected all speakers, as well as the BalancedForced 210 subwoofer, to the Anthem MRX 510 receiver. A [Sony](#) BDP-BX650 Blu-ray player was connected as the main video source, and I used a MacBook Pro, streaming digital music from Tidal, for music demonstrations. I also streamed movies from both Netflix and VUDU, through the [Blu-ray](#) player or through my [Sony](#) LCD smart TV.

Click over to Page Two for Performance, The Downside, Comparison & Competition, and Conclusion...

CONTINUE READING >>>>

0 Comments Home Theater Review  Login ▾

 Recommend  Share Sort by Best ▾



Start the discussion...

Be the first to comment.

ALSO ON HOME THEATER REVIEW

WHAT'S THIS?

How DSP Can Take Audio to New Heights in 2016

8 comments • 2 months ago

Butch — I'd say that it is about time that audiophiles caught up with what guitar amps with effects have been doing for years. Want ...

Dolby Announces More Atmos Titles in UHD and Blu-ray Formats

1 comment • 7 days ago

Jonathan Goeldner — Fox's UHD edition of 'The Peanuts Movie' also has Dolby Atmos sound - a first for Fox; let's hope this is a ...

Questions Remain About Ultra HD Blu-ray After CES

13 comments • a month ago

Doug46 — Having spent 4 days at CES and seeing all the new displays (all 4K, no new 1080p) with HDR, expanded color, ...

Marantz Launches HD-AMP1 Integrated Amplifier

4 comments • 2 months ago

lucretius — It's 35W (RMS) X 2 into 8 ohms and 70W (RMS) X 2 into 4 ohms (according to Marantz). They specify a frequency ...

 Subscribe  Add Disqus to your site  Add Disqus Add  Privacy

http://disqus.com/?ref_noscript

Follow Home Theater Review

[Home Theater Review on Facebook](#)

[Home Theater Review on Twitter](#)

More Information on Home Theater Review

To contact [HomeTheaterReview.com](#), view our [rate card](#), [ad specs](#) or to read our [privacy policy](#) [CLICK HERE](#)

theater

review.com

Luxury Publishing Group Inc.
15332 Antioch Street
Pacific Palisades, CA 90272
310.860.9988

