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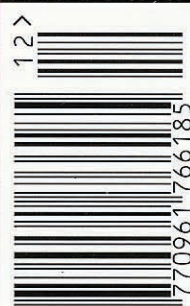


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Concentric issue

Tannoy hone their Dual-Concentric drive unit in the new Precision 6.4 loudspeakers, Noel Keywood finds.

Big Tannoys are muscular and exciting, but not fatiguing, nor 'obvious' – although neighbours may think otherwise. The Precision 6.4s reviewed here don't stray far from this winning formula. Priced at £2399 they may seem a tad expensive, but not so in reality. I found them more amenable and impressive than rivals up to £6000 or so. Their ability exceeds their price.

The Precision 6.4 is a big floorstander, but firmly a Tannoy in its technology.

At heart it uses a Tannoy 6in Dual-Concentric drive unit, where the treble unit fires out from the centre of the bass cone through a midrange horn – a unique unit that lies at the heart of most Tannoys.

A 25mm (1in) titanium dome tweeter sits at the base of the horn with a Tulip Waveguide – the effect of the horn being to extend bandwidth as well as raise efficiency and control dispersion. As a result the tweeter covers more of the



audio band, crossing over to the bass unit at 1.6kHz much more smoothly than a conventional tweeter.

This Dual Concentric arrangement occupies the top position of the four-drive unit array in what is a big cabinet. Below it sits a bass unit that works up to 170Hz, and below that are two ABRs, or Auxiliary Bass Radiators.

The bass unit uses a treated paper pulp cone and rubber surround like the Dual-Concentric above it, and so do the ABRs. These are just undriven cones; they look like drive units but no power goes to them.

ABRs act in much the same way as a port, serving to damp and control the bass unit as well as radiate low bass. They are also easier to tune and control than a port, by adjusting cone mass, and – in theory at least – give better bass.

What's also important in any floorstander is cabinet size. This affects bass depth and quality as well as sensitivity – crucial to determining how loud a loudspeaker will go from one Watt of power.

To that end the Precision 6.4s stand 1052cm high, are 310cm wide and 352cm deep. It makes them big – but perhaps not overpoweringly so in the current market where one metre tall is considered the accepted domestic upper limit in this loudspeaker category.

The 6.4s are solidly made, sitting on a plinth with screw feet that allow adjustment. Weighing 21.6kg they are heavy and solid feeling, but movable all the same.

The big cabinet and efficient Dual Concentric drive unit allows the Precision 6.4 to produce 90dB (loud) from one Watt so like all Tannoys these need little power to go very loud and around 40 Watts will produce plenty enough volume for most people even in a big room. I used them for months with a wide variety of amplifiers, but mostly Quad QMP Elite monoblocks and an Icon Audio Stereo 60 MkIII valve amplifier and both worked nicely with the 6.4s.

Our review samples came with a deep gloss walnut veneer finish and looked smart, if unintrusive.

The rear panel carries sturdy bi-wire terminals and Tannoy's earth

tag that allows the drive unit chassis to be grounded, lowering noise levels where radio interference exists they claim.

SOUND QUALITY

The midrange horn of the Dual-Concentric is projective and Tannoy have slightly emphasised this quality in the 6.4 by ensuring midband output is strong, our measurements show.

As a result the 6.4s pushed vocals forward strongly, something I noticed immediately with Diana Krall singing *Narrow Daylight* (24/96). She was placed forward on the soundstage, well in front of the loudspeakers, a position that made her seem very close.

Intelligibility was excellent. I heard her every melancholy word, and the Tannoys reminded me a little of B&Ws in this respect. However, whereas B&W will ensure treble is obvious, the big 6.4s are subtle and couth at the top end. Treble was smooth and unemphasised, making for a very easy listen. Dynamic inflections in Diana Krall's voice were conveyed strongly, making for lively and convincing performance that I found impressive.

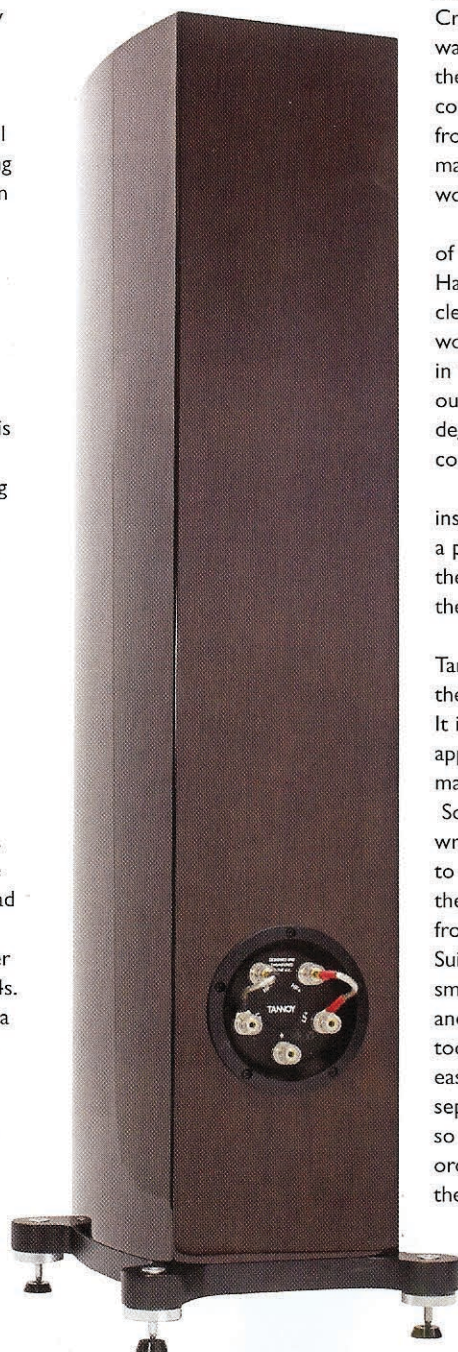
The forwardness of the midband takes any emphasis away from bass and the lower midband, making for a balance with no sign of warmth or chestiness in it, and no boxiness or coloration either. As George Harrison picked the strings of an acoustic guitar in 'Woman Don't You Cry for Me' (24/96) his finger action was sparkingly clear, with sound from the guitar body conveyed cleanly and concisely with a welcome freedom from unwanted cabinet returns. This made the 6.4s sound clear, dry and wonderfully uncoloured.

The smooth acapella harmonies of the Persuasions singing 'Angel of Harlem' (24/96) were projected clearly outward, with every "woo woo" and "doo wop" hanging vividly in front of me. The Tannoys pushed out the vocals to a remarkable degree, always sounding clean and concise.

They also image superbly, instruments and singers being all of a piece – a quality that strengthens their sense of physical presence on the soundstage.

I suspect this is down to Tannoy's midrange horn because all their Duals enjoy the same quality. It is something I have learned to appreciate about the brand over many years of reviewing them.

So too the big bold and solidly-wrought soundstage which served to push the harp forward at me at the opening of 'Waltz of the Flowers' from Tchaikovsky's 'Nutcracker Suite'. Horns played the main theme smoothly, sounding suitably metallic and fruity, then massed violins took up the theme with a lovely easy quality. Instruments were well separated and strongly expressed, so as the tune passed from one orchestral section to the next I felt they were all well separated and of their own nature. I should say here that the Quad QMP Elite monoblocks I used for much of the review period are smoothies with a mild top end



The rear panel sports sturdy bi-wire terminals and Tannoy's earth tag which allows the chassis to be grounded.

that I felt did the 6.4s justice. The Quads also have a powerful low-end punch that is right in the Tannoy domain.

The innate balance of the 6.4s was made obvious by Otis Redding singing 'Dock of the Bay' (24/192). The opening acoustic bass line was firmly stated but not bloated. Instead it fell into a nice relationship with

scale and imaging.

They moved performances out at me, putting singers in my lap. At high volume from CD they did on occasion display a hard edge, but I didn't experience this so much from the high resolution digital I played and suspect that the 6.4s were relentlessly conveying the problems of CD rather than anything else – but

Matched with care the big Precision 6.4s are a gripping loudspeaker to hear.

They offer a clear, concise and accurate sound. At the price, they are an attractive floorstander well worth hearing if you want a big sound.

"they image superbly, instruments and singers being all of a piece – a quality that strengthens their sense of physical presence on the soundstage"

the following vocal – which sounded stunningly clean and convincingly natural as only a good-quality analogue recording from 1964 can do. Otis was pushed out at me so I got every fine nuance of his delivery. The Muscle Shoals horns played their lovely accompaniment in the studio alongside Otis, the 6.4s capturing the scene beautifully.

Spinning Lady Gaga's 'Monster' on CD to check for subsonics from the synths made me aware that the 6.4s can be pushy in the upper midband, throwing out masses of information but taking no prisoners in the process. Lady Gaga jumped at me, her voice having a titanium hard edge at high volume.

Bass went low but the 6.4s are far more controlled than many others – including most Tannoys – so there was not the big rumblings that I have heard from, for example, the same manufacturer's DC10s. There's no worry about foam bungs being needed to tame the 6.4s low-end.

For evidence I heard the 6.4s step down the frequency scale into the basement with 'Dance In The Dark', where low end power drifted through the room. Sitting on our settee listening to this, I mused that a Naim amplifier would suit these speakers just as well as the big Quads I was using.

CONCLUSION

Tannoy have re-worked their sound balance a tad with the 6.4s. More mid-band forward than other Tannoys I have heard and with better damped bass, these floorstanders were nothing less than impressive in their

upper mid forwardness does carry this penalty.

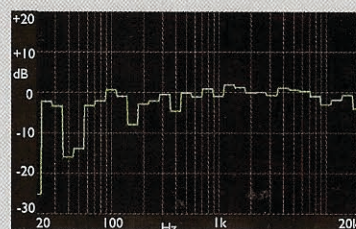
Bass was deep and tight, if not forward. I got stronger bass from a valve amp than the transistor Quads; they suit low damping factor valve amps I realised when using an Icon Audio Stereo 60 MkIII equipped with KT150s.



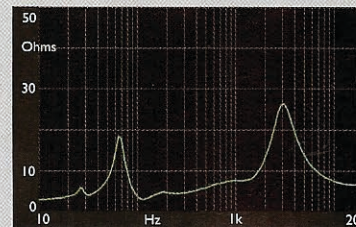
MEASURED PERFORMANCE

The Tannoy Precision 6.4s show a small amount of midrange emphasis or, seen another way, muted frequency extremes. They are smooth and even across the critical midband and have no crossover sickout to soften detailing. Treble rolls away smoothly, but not by enough to make the 6.4s sound warm, so much as easy and unchallenging. Lower bass frequencies have also been kept in check; this is a quite well damped loudspeaker that will not sound bass heavy or boomy, and it has plenty of low bass, reaching down to 20Hz.

FREQUENCY RESPONSE



IMPEDANCE



Making the midrange prominent pushes vocals forward slightly and makes the sound seemingly more explicit.

Our 200mS decay analysis shows an ordered and reasonably good midband and treble result, delayed energy levels being normal enough in level, with no particular overhangs, suggesting low coloration. Not unsurprisingly for a big cabinet producing substantial bass, at low frequencies the cabinet is 'hot' around 100Hz on our coloured decay map and a three-dimensional waterfall decay graph shows substantial cabinet overhang, suggesting bass might be a bit coloured or full sounding.

Sensitivity was very high at 90dB from one nominal Watt of input (2.8V) but with a D.C. resistance of just 2.9 Ohms the bass units draw current to achieve this. Our impedance curve clearly shows this is a low impedance loudspeaker at bass frequencies. But the 6.4s will go very loud from little power and need no more than a 40 Watt amplifier.

The Precision 6.4s will sound smooth, have good presence and possess deep bass. There's no bass emphasis or treble lift, so accuracy takes precedence over effect. Little power is needed to go very loud. **NK**

TANNOY PRECISION 6.4 £2399



OUTSTANDING - amongst the best

VERDICT

Clear, forward sound with great projection. Need little power. With great finish and appearance, a loudspeaker worth hearing.

FOR

- clear, concise and accurate sound
- big and well finished
- exciting dynamics

AGAINST

- sounds hard with some CDs
- dry bass

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