



FIELD TEST ■ EDITOR'S PICKS NEW PRODUCTS

Thiel CS1.7: Tonal Accuracy, Small Footprint

By Robert Archer

THIEL AUDIO'S NEW CS1.7 loudspeaker is the first major product release since the death of company founder Jim Thiel and the subsequent sale of the company to a new ownership group. As such, it is a significant product for the Kentucky-based speaker company.

The CS1.7 replaces the 10 year-old CS1.6 and the new speaker is designed for stereo and home theater applications in which homeowners want a space-friendly, high-performance loudspeaker that doesn't come with an outrageous price tag.

Features

The CS1.7 is an elegant-looking, two-way loudspeaker that employs the latest 1-inch Thiel tweeter and a 6.5-inch aluminum woofer that features Thiel's "star" design, which adds rigidity to the driver.

It is important to point out the CS1.7 benefits from trickle-down engineering developments derived from Thiel's flagship CS3.7 speaker, and it adheres to Jim Thiel's time-and-phase coherent design concepts that are highlighted by its sloped baffle and use of a first-order crossover.

Aesthetically, like other Thiel products, the CS1.7, which is sold in pairs, is available in a choice of finishes, as well as custom finishes from its custom shop. Unlike many speakers, the three-foot tall speaker offers just a single set of binding posts.

Setup

Following the unpacking directions that Thiel includes with the pair of speakers, I ran AudioQuest speaker cables from an Integra DTR-70.4 receiver, and Straight Wire cables from a Bryston amplifier for home theater and two-channel listening.

After making the connections, I adjusted the speakers' positioning with a Craftsman laser tape measure. The speaker's binding posts are large and sturdy and easily allowed me to run both pairs of cables so I could listen to stereo and HT without having to disconnect either set of cables. After about 15 hours of listening, I tweaked the speakers' toe-in and settled on their 8.5-foot distance from my "money seat."



The first major release from Thiel since the company was sold to a new ownership group following the death of company founder Jim Thiel shows marks of the Thiel legacy.

Performance

Unlike traditional speakers that use, say, a traditional cabinet and fourth-order crossover, the CS1.7 requires a little extra setup attention to produce a sense of image depth and a wide soundstage.

That extra setup has a payoff. I found the speaker to far exceed its specification in terms of its dynamic capabilities. I measured the speaker to play down to 31.5Hz (this bass comes with the break-in of the speakers) with no excessive roll off. Its overall tonal character is smooth throughout its midrange and top end, and it is also extremely detailed in its presentation of music content.

Listening to specific content like the vinyl version of Billy Squire's "Don't Say No" and songs like "Lonely is the Night" I thought the 1.7s also delivered a ton of resolution; I could hear the distinct sound of a Gibson Les Paul on some overdubbed parts of the song and the discrete use of reverb to accent specific parts of the song. Switching to Rush's "Moving Pictures" on vinyl I could hear the decay of the chord in the main riff of "Tom Sawyer," trailing into the bridge of the song and the punchiness of the bass riff underneath the guitar solo.

"I measured the speaker to play down to 31.5 Hz with no excessive roll off."

On home theater content such as "The Dark Knight Rises" I found the speakers to blend well with my other non-Thiel speakers. This trait underscores the fact that the 1.7s are not voiced as aggressively (in the top end) as their predecessor the 1.6, which ultimately means they are much more complementary to a wider variety of content and other speaker products.

Conclusions

The CS1.7s are the perfect complement to a high-performance two-channel or home theater system. They are priced competitively, don't take up a ton of space and they deliver the performance that Thiel has been known for throughout its history as a premium audio manufacturer.

SPECS

Thiel CS1.7 Loudspeaker

- ▶ Two-way loudspeaker with Thiel's first-order crossover network; crossover point is 1.44kHz
- ▶ Ported enclosure with a 1-inch tweeter and 6.5-inch woofer
- ▶ Rated frequency response is 44Hz to 20kHz; 4 ohm impedance
- ▶ Thiel says the CS1.7 is 88dB sensitive, and it can handle a range of power from 20 watts to 200 watts
- ▶ Dimensions: 9.5 inches x 11.8 inches x 36.5 inches

MSRP is \$3,999 per pair
thielaudio.com

CE PRO VERDICT

PROS: Tonally accurate speaker that produces a big soundstage and lots of image depth. ▲ The CS1.7 doesn't take up a lot of space and it is available in a choice of finishes. ▲ A nice solution for two-channel audio and home theater.

CONS: For optimal performance the CS1.7s benefit from step-up A/V receivers and amplifiers. Entry-level receivers and amps may not effectively drive the speakers. ▲ Thiel speakers are well known for long break-in times. The CS1.7s will take approximately 300 hours to hit their stride musically.

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