The twenty5.23 gives an authoritative performance that’s devoid of any vices

PMC has been doing transmission line designs for decades, and this is the hallmark of its loudspeaker range. Its variation on the theme is Advanced Transmission Line (ATL), which sports very careful tuning, construction and acoustic material inside. The benefits start with the fact the air pressure inside the cabinet is pretty constant so the bass isn’t a moveable feast, depending on the frequency being played at any one instant. PMC claims it reduces distortion, which in turn doesn’t pollute the midrange and treble. Efficiency and bass extension are said to be better and the speaker as a whole behaves more consistently at differing volumes. PMC uses a special Laminair vent to exploit these advantages, reducing the turbulence at the port, which impedes airflow. Just like one swallow doesn’t make an autumn, a bass loading system doesn’t make the loudspeaker. The twenty5.23 sports a PMC-designed, SEAS-made 27mm fabric soft dome tweeter, cooled by Ferrofluid. This crosses over at a unusually low 1.8kHz to a single 140mm woven glass fibre cone mid/bass driver with cast alloy chassis. This stiff cone material is new for this manufacturer, which has previously used doped paper; PMC says it’s able to deliver greater excursion than before, making for a lower distortion and improved power handling. The transmission line that this is at one end of is effectively 2.4m long, which is quite remarkable considering the speaker stands just 907mm tall. In effect, the twenty5.23 is a compact floorstander sporting a complex loading system for its two relatively conventional drive units. The traditional drawback of transmission lines is that they’re relatively power hungry; the quoted sensitivity is good for its type, but is a good few dB down on the class average. You’ll need a punchy solid-state power amplifier with a minimum of around 100W RMS per channel to really get the best from it. I find Exposure’s 3010S2-D (HFC 397) is up to the task, but the more the merrier.

Sound quality
There’s something of a TDRSS-like quality to this speaker, which behaves more like the sort of large three-way design you find in studio monitoring environments. Its bass doesn’t thunder like a top JBL with a wide front baffle, yet it has a wonderfully authoritative quality that is always there. Even, firm and insistant, the bottom end is quite unusual in this category of floorstander and you’re quickly aware you’re listening to something a bit out of the ordinary. Kraftwerk’s ‘Tour De France’ is a brilliant techno track, ranging high and low and proving a real work out for a serious loudspeaker. The twenty5.23 flies through the test, serving up a wonderfully accurate, highly musically satisfying sound. The bass is a joy, but what really impresses is how well integrated it is into the rest of the speaker, and just how good the rest of the speaker is. The bottom end reminds me of a Quad electrostatic, but with far greater travel on the panel. It’s tight, taut and dry, yet there’s a certain barrel-chestedness to it; when the song demands that large tracts of low notes be played, it’s out the speaker that blinks first – usually it will be the amp. It pushes out large amounts of low frequencies, yet they’re not overblown or out of control. As there’s no obvious artificial bass peak built in, the sub-100Hz area is so even that some will even feel it’s a little light. There’s Cosmic ‘Poo’ quickly disabuses the listening of this idea. It has some wonderful, deep Moog bass, which plumbs the very depths of even the largest of loudspeakers. Most simply fail to reproduce it, but the twenty5.23 makes a surprisingly martial job of it. All the same, this speaker is so much more than this. The supple jazz-infused rhythms of the ‘there’ track shows it is innately musical; it just loves getting into the...
**Q&A**

**Keith Tonge**
Marketing manager, PMC

**DP:** What sort of sound did you set out to achieve with the twenty5.23?

**KT:** Our aim is to produce a speaker you listen through rather than to. We avoid any colouration that could detract from the original musical performance, therefore the listener experiences exactly what the artist intended. The twenty5.23 is the most popular loudspeaker we produce, and the size, look and ease of drive opens it up for virtually any keen music lover.

**Who worked on this speaker and why was a TL chosen?**

The chief designer was Oliver Thomas and Peter Thomas was involved at every key stage of development and the final voicing. Transmission Lines are not the easiest way of designing or building a speaker as there are far more variables than a sealed or reflex design, but there are many more advantages. The ATL (Advanced Transmission Line) is coated in very specific absorbent materials that absorb unwanted colouration, producing a cleaner, clearer bass and midrange. The vocal region is beautifully defined and natural as there isn’t any harmonic distortion to mask it. They are also easy to drive, produce smooth, deep bass at low levels and perform like a speaker of far larger stature. The twenty5 series is the use of our Laminair air flow technology, which eradicates air turbulence and resistance at the end of the line making the flow of air faster and quieter; hence the bass is more nimble, dynamic and uncoloured.

**What drivers are used and why were they chosen?**

The Sonolux soft dome tweeter was co-engineered with SEAS of Norway, and the mid/bass unit was a ground-up project for the new-style ATL, which has incorporated the Laminair vent. It uses a bespoke design that uses a very tight weave glass fibre for strength and above all extremely low colouration. This material is as neutral as paper, but can withstand far higher pressures and excursions.

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**CONCLUSION**

Expensive for its size, as soon as you hear it in anger – so to speak – it becomes apparent that PMC’s twenty5.23 is something of a snap at the price. It serves up an authoritative sound that majors on power and punch, but is smooth and sophisticated too. Its bass is a treat – quite unlike many conventional reflex-loading designs. As such, this loudspeaker comes highly recommended but still won’t be for everyone; with this even more than most, auditioning is essential.

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**OUR VERDICT**

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<td><strong>LIKE:</strong> Musical, dynamic sound; clean, open and articulate</td>
<td><strong>DISLIKE:</strong> Needs a powerful amplifier to give its best</td>
<td><strong>WE SAY:</strong> Excellent compact floorstander with real design flair</td>
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**REVIEWS PMC TWENTY5.23**