PMC twenty5.26i

An unchanged exterior hides PMC’s crossover and driver upgrades made to its premium three-way floorstander

Review: Mark Craven Lab: Paul Miller

I n the Who’s ‘Won’t Get Fooled Again’, Roger Daltrey memorably sings ‘Meet the new boss – same as the old boss’. It’s a phrase that sprang to my mind when confronted by PMC’s twenty5.26i, as this floorstanding speaker is, outwardly, identical to its twenty5.26 predecessor launched in 2016, with cabinet dimensions matching to the millimetre. Yet PMC describes its new twenty5i series as a ‘substantial re-engineering’, improving performance without moving away from the signature sound of its forbear.

Aply, the twenty5.26i is the ‘boss’ of the new lineup, and the only three-way model. Below it are the twenty5.21i and twenty5.22i standmounts, along with two other two-way floorstanders (the twenty5.23i and twenty5.24i). There’s also a new centre channel speaker for home cinema installations. Across the twenty5i series, buyers get a quartet of finish options. Orca, Oak, and a new White Silk all keep the same £8495 per pair price point, while choosing Diamond Black adds a £500 premium.

‘Mercy’s rapid-fire verses fizzed from the centre stage’

GOT A ROLL WITH IT

Now we come to the high-frequency drive unit. This 19mm tweeter, designed in conjunction with SEAS, places a soft dome within a 34mm roll surround. This pairing, says PMC, delivers both the wide dispersion of a 19mm tweeter with the improved mid-frequency response of a larger driver. This has enabled a 1.7Hz crossover point to be used on the two-way twenty5i models, even if a higher 4kHz crossover is retained for the two-way twenty5.24i model. There’s also a quartet of finish options.

TIGHT AS A NUT

Realism, transparency and musicality. This is the three-pronged mission statement of the twenty5i series and with that in mind it’s hard to consider the twenty5.26i as anything other than a success. This new three-way floorstander picks up the baton from previous PMC models, impressing with the clean, nuanced delivery, precise sense of rhythm and top-to-bottom balance the company’s fans expect. This clarity and timing was there to savour on the Queen track ‘Another One Bites The Dust’ [The Game; Tidal Hi-Fi 44.1kHz/16-bit], one of the band’s most disco-infused moments and so it’s no surprise to see PMC’s ATL (Advanced Transmission Line) uses this technique, its claimed 3.3m effective length tuned to a notional 26Hz [see Lab Report, p.47].

The punchy drum pattern and rhythm of the baseline were locked in perfect union, while Freddie Mercury’s rapid-fire verses fizzed from the centre stage yet retained a delicate reverber. His vocals are the layered through the chorus, and the interplay between them was scintillating.

With the Queen recording there was an enjoyably taut and unadulterated feel to the twenty5.26i’s handling of the bass, but with Faithless’s dance tune ‘We Come 1’ [Outspective; BMG 74321 850832] I got more of an impression of how much that 170mm driver punches above its weight. Given a physical leg-up by the cabinet’s ATL architecture, it managed to range impressively deep and sound lighting fast and responsive. This ability to cover wide personality, again and again throughout my audition, providing large scale, energetic footing to tracks that demanded it.

I could have happily fed the twenty5.26i one Bites The Dust’ [The Game; Tidal Hi-Fi 44.1kHz/16-bit], one of the band’s most disco-infused moments and so it’s no surprise to see PMC’s ATL (Advanced Transmission Line) uses this technique, its claimed 3.3m effective length tuned to a notional 26Hz [see Lab Report, p.47].
before, and its talent for dynamics as the music ranged from soft to forte. 

Listen to more straightforward material that’s not so skilfully mastered and you may feel you’re not tapping into the twenty5.26i’s obvious full potential. Yet even as I ran through a variety of relatively low-fi recordings, I was never ‘disappointed’ by what I heard. AC/DC’s ‘It’s A Long Way To The Top (If You Wanna Rock ‘N’ Roll)’ [High Voltage; EMI 494 6712] does not have the holographic imaging of other compositions, but while the speaker did not have to dig deep, neither did its midrange driver 

Those seeking a speaker that works with the music, rather than unduly adding to it, will cherish PMC’s premium-priced floorstander. Dynamic and detailed, transparent and well-timed, the twenty5.26i doesn’t resort to bass bluster or overt treble to impress. There are more eye-catching rivals out there, but park your superficiality and you’ll discover PMC’s from-the-studio aesthetic suits the performance. 

Sound Quality: 85%