I was recently smitten by the range-top PMC Twenty.24 loudspeakers, so this review was going to be a bit of a disappointment, wasn’t it? My real love is large loudspeakers. Then I recalled that one of my favourite loudspeakers from PMC’s older ranges is the DB1i. I remember being impressed at the way PMC’s transmission line technology had wrought such an expansive sound from such a dinky box (and yes, that really is what ‘DB’ stands for!). I was keen, therefore to see if they could pull off the same trick twice...

Initial impressions were very good indeed. The 21s share the same 27mm Solonex soft dome tweeter as the 24s, but this time mated to a smaller 140mm bass/midrange driver. This driver is loaded by a transmission line of 1.72m effective length (5.6ft in old money) and vents on the front panel below it. This is an unusual step for PMC as their previous standmounters such as the aforementioned DB1i have featured rear-firing lines; however, PMC’s Keith Tonge explained that the re-arrangement allowed for a greater effective line length and thus more bass. This would seem to be borne out, on paper at least, by the fact that it is the TB2i in the old range that achieves the same frequency range as the Twenty.21s, from a bigger cabinet.

The two drivers are united by a high quality crossover circuit that utilises the same crossover frequency of 1.8kHz shared by all models in the range. Ultra thick copper tracking adorns the PCB for minimal signal loss and two pairs of terminals on the rear panel permit bi-wiring or bi-amping once the supplied links are removed. Of course, a standmounter requires stands and PMC have done themselves proud here as well, designing in-house a fine matching stand for the 21s. This consists of a sandwich style top plate with a layer of damping rubber, a feature repeated at the bottom plate. Two vertical tubes support the top plate. The front one is hollow and can be filled with the damping material of your choice. The rear tube is damped in its own right but not fillable because it has another trick up its sleeve.
The PMC Twenty.21s were impressively solid yet fixing-free grille mounting, means that the Twenty.21s are an absolute pleasure to welcome into the domestic environment.

PMC seem to be on something of a design roll at the moment as I love the sloped-back styling of the whole range and the matching stand ensures that sense of style is not lost on the smaller models.

So, the Twenty.21s are a visual and tactile delight, but could they deliver the goods sonically? I was keen to find out...

**SOUND QUALITY**

Having spent a good deal of time positioning the Twenty.24s to obtain best performance, I found myself repeating the task with the 21s. The rising treble response means that they are best not positioned firing directly at you, as per many speakers. PMC instead recommending that their listening axes cross behind your head. In fact, I brought the speakers closer together than usual and had them firing straight ahead and with this position established, the results were hugely impressive.

Correctly oriented, that rising treble suddenly smooths out to become a magnificent swathe of upper end detail that grips and times like few other compacts at the price. I actually played the introduction to Steely Dan’s ‘Jack of Speed’ over and over about six times in a row, simply because the cymbals were so crisp, vivid and utterly delightful!

When the track started properly though, Donald Fagen’s vocals were captured perfectly centre-stage and the backing bass line propelled the action along with vigour and purposeful intent. The bass from these tiny tots may not be quite up to the task of rattling ornaments off shelves, but it digs impressively deep and without any hint of overblown strain. It is aided in its task by an upper bass that is lithe and blessed with seriously impressive levels of detail. Imagery from the

Yes, maybe others have done similar but nearly all models that I can think of, off the top of my head, wear price tags considerably larger than that of the 21s. If your heart wants big loudspeakers but your head says they must be small, then look no further.