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hardware review

# prophecy1 – a compact divination of sound

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Ed Selley

## PMC prophecy1 speakers

There has now been a compact, two-way standmount in the PMC range for the best part of 30 years and the recipe that successive generations have been based on has been extremely consistent in that time. In one specific regard, the prophecy1 actually deviates from the script in that it's no longer the most affordable example of its type (the prodigy1 now fills this role) but, once you start poring over the spec, it's very much business as usual.

This means the prophecy1 is a two way speaker with a 27mm soft dome tweeter which is derived from those in PMC's professional studio monitors. It features ferrofluid cooling and a specially designed dispersion mounting, visibly different to anything on the preceding twenty Series iterations, that is recessed further into the fascia than earlier designs in order to assist with directivity up to 180 degrees.

This hands over at an impressively low 1.5kHz to a 125mm mid bass driver made of an ultra-light, mica-filled cone material that PMC says is the ideal combination of rigidity, damping, and weight. Where the tweeter has been adapted from an existing model, this driver is all new and has been developed specifically for the prophecy range. This is because the midbass must be correctly coupled to the transmission line that is a staple feature of all PMC designs. In the prophecy1, this is a 1.79 meter (5ft 8in) design which represents a small increase in effective length over the outgoing twenty5.21i.

### Filter feeding

The reason for these few extra inches is down to the most profound single change between the prophecy range and the preceding twenty models in their various forms. These introduced the Laminair port which was designed to better control the flow of air out

of the transmission line but did give the speakers to a slightly unfortunate aesthetic that suggested they fed on krill. The prophecy range has the latest iteration which takes the form of a metal extrusion fitted to the base of the cabinet. This new arrangement is called Laminair X and offers further improvements in air management. PMC claims that the result is a potential drop of 3dB in harmonic distortion which is a significant jump. The metal extrusion is separated from the cabinet by a cork gasket which serves to partially decouple it.

This transmission line helps the relatively compact prophecy1 hit the psychologically important 50Hz threshold at -3dB. Every bit as important as this quoted low end figure is that the prophecy1 achieves this figure at the end of a very even acoustic wave rather than

as some weird outlier after the response has tailed off. Some of this behaviour is governed by the crossover which is an evolution of PMC design practise dating back decades. This eschews a minimalist approach and uses rigorously implemented slopes. One area where PMC has been able to realise some savings over previous generations is by closely pair matching slightly more affordable (although still extremely capable) components in the pursuit of tighter tolerances and greater consistency. This process is undertaken by hand and PMC feels that the results are more than worth the effort as it means that the consistency of performance is higher.

**Reassuring aesthetic**

This isn't the only way that some savings have been implemented either. The prophecy range now only uses three drivers across all models and the complex arrangement of non parallel front and rear panels has been abandoned which – to this set of eyes makes for a more visually reassuring aesthetic. This has helped PMC to actually reduce the cost of some of the prophecy models relative to their predecessors and pegs the cost of the prophecy1 close to the older 21i than ongoing inflation would otherwise ensure was possible.

I do feel that the prophecy1 isn't as fortunate a recipient of these aesthetic changes as some other members of the range though. I previously tested the prophecy 5 which I genuinely feel is perhaps *the* most proportionally elegant and attractive PMC speaker I've ever tested. The prophecy1 uses the same ingredients but comes out feeling ever so slightly spindly by comparison. I can't fault the way it's built though and the Mediterranean oak finish of the review samples is attractive as well with blackened and natural walnut also an option. Removable grilles are supplied too.

**Sound quality**

Where the prophecy1 more closely apes its prettier sibling is how it sounds though and this means that the news from here on out is pretty much exclusively good. This is still a speaker that needs a little care in terms of placement but significantly less than some older PMC models. The 85dB/w sensitivity also feels somewhere between utterly honest and pessimistic and I don't feel that the PMC is a hard speaker to drive in reality.

More important than any of these things though, the prophecy1 effortlessly delivers key aspects of what defines a PMC. Give it the varied stylings of *Always Centered at Night* by Moby (one of his finer recent efforts as he largely leaves the business of singing to other people) and the confidence with which the PMC provides the underpinning low end for these tracks acts as the frame that the rest of the performance is hung off. Even running at relatively low volumes, the prophecy1 has a confidence to its low frequencies and that is notable.

**Nowhere to hide**

With this frame in place, the prophecy1 proceeds to fill it with a combination of tonal realism and detail that has long been part of what PMC does. On the track Transit, Dutch/ Sudanese singer Gaidaa performs over a deep bass and sparse, almost skeletal instrumentation. There is no place to hide in terms of making sure she sounds believable and the PMC constructs her voice as a tangible presence between the speakers. Give the

prophecy1 the more conventionally audiophile Interlude 1 on Sarah Jarosz's *Blue Heron Suite* and the result is no less tangible in how it sounds. Even here, the plucked bass strings are delivered with a heft that gives you a perception of realism that stops you listening to the equipment and lets you listen through it instead.

As noted, this has been a PMC virtue for many years; you can hardly have an acronym with the word 'Monitor' in your name and not achieve it. What marks the prophecy1 as an evolution of the breed is that it manages to be exceptionally revealing and yet forgiving at the same time. Seasick Steve's debut album *Dog House Music* is magnificent but has **the finesse and bandwidth of a drunken Whatsapp voice note**. On

some older PMCs it simply would not have been possible to listen past the sheer dinginess of the recording to the magic beneath but the prophecy1 is able to do this, almost apologetically noting that there are limits to the information available but as a footnote rather than the main subject matter.

**Believe it or not**

And, believe it or not, this isn't the best party piece that the PMC has. The effect that the Laminair X metalwork has on the performance of the prophecy1 is profound. I've never had any qualms about how hard any PMC speaker can hit relative to its dimensions; be it a slender standmount like this or **the semi portable earthquakes sold in the Se range**. With this ability has always come the proviso that some of the attributes of this bass have not truly been to my taste. There was always the faint perception of air being moved that crept into what you heard. For this reason above any other, I've always been drawn to the isobaric arrangements of Neat and Kudos because much of the same depth can be achieved without this perception. With the prophecy 5 and now the 1, this has changed significantly.

What this means in practice is that you can play the thudding urgency of Scratch Massive's *Signal* and **each deep bass note is a crisp, effortless strike that is completely dissipated before the next beat hit**. It lends the prophecy1 the same joyous speed and definition that has so endeared me to the Durham contingent over the years. If this is the future of the transmission line, I am very much on board.

**Conclusion**

The prophecy1 does this while making sure that the lineage all the way back to the Fb1 is readily identifiable. It is every inch a PMC, simply one that takes the long held abilities and hones and refines them further without costing the end user more. It's a pleasure to use and live with and has to be seen as one of the very finest speakers available at the price point.

**Pros**

**Refined bass performance:** The new Laminair X technology significantly reduces air turbulence. Bass notes are described as "crisp, effortless strikes" without the audible air movement found in some older transmission line designs.
**Forgiving nature:** While remaining revealing, the speaker is surprisingly kind to poor recordings. It allows the listener to enjoy the music even when the production quality is low.
**Exceptional vocal realism:** The low crossover point (1.5 kHz) and high-quality drivers create a "tangible presence," particularly with vocal and acoustic tracks.
**Improved value:** By simplifying the cabinet construction and reducing driver variety, PMC has kept the price close to previous models despite inflation.
**Wide dispersion:** The recessed tweeter design assists with directivity up to 180 degrees, making the speaker less finicky about exact placement than previous generations.
**Consistent performance:** Hand-matched components ensure that the pair you buy performs exactly as the designers intended, offering high levels of consistency.

**Cons**

**Awkward aesthetics:** While the floorstanding models are praised, the standmount Prophecy1 is described as looking "ever so slightly spindly" by comparison.
**Lower sensitivity:** At 85dB/w, this is not a highly sensitive speaker, meaning it will likely perform best when paired with an amplifier that has good current delivery.
**Loss of the "classic" silhouette:** Fans of the traditional slanted PMC cabinets may find the move to standard parallel front and rear panels less visually distinct.
**Higher entry price:** It is no longer the most affordable speaker in the PMC lineup, as that role has been taken over by the Prodigy series.