



*Ventrical* is quite demanding. The more you put into the set-up of the speaker, the greater the rewards. In general, however, we're not dealing with a great fan of boomy, resonant or cavernous rooms. And the *Ventrical* prefers the softer approach of a Stemfoort *SF100* integrated amplifier to the slightly brash *Exposure* combo.

When accurately set up, the *Ventrical* somehow reminds me of the Audioplan *Kontrapunkt* — a smoothly satisfying and unfatiguing experience. It produces an image that is dramatically precise, but which drops back from behind the speaker baffles, as opposed to projecting an image into the room. Also like the *Kontrapunkt*, PT's *Ventrical* has a very definite volume envelope that cannot be breached. This speaker will play loud enough to upset most inner city neighbours, but if you want pinned-to-the-wall volume levels, look elsewhere.

The *Ventrical* has a nice solid underpinning of bass. This is not the deepest, most grumbling bass around, but this speaker only uses a 100mm bass driver. A transmission line helps, but you cannae change the laws o' physics, Cap'n.

Sometimes, to my surprise, the *Ventrical* suddenly swung deep notes, when required by discs like Leftfield's *Leftism*. As with many transmission line designs, this bass is not the fastest, most spot-on performer in the rhythm department. It will not provoke a negative reaction under normal circumstances, but fans of timing-oriented systems will probably not be so impressed.

I'd be lying if I suggested that the PT *Ventrical* was the speaker for all people. Deep bass freaks, those seeking ear-bending volume levels and timing nutters are likely to find it downright unacceptable. However, if you lust after the glorious transparency that only a Quad *Electrostatic* can achieve, but lack either the funds or suitable domestic arrangements, this is a pretty good alternative.

#### Vitamin-fed minis

I've had so many boxes to fall over during the last few months, that even the tiniest speaker would be hard to like. Fortunately, the £250 System Audio 905 speakers are seriously small. Never mind Royd or Rega speakers, a pair of these tiny

If style and DSP are all you need, Technics SC-LS10 is for you (see 'Atmos R Us', p15).

Smaller than your average speaker, the System Audio 905 lacks nothing in the fun department.

starlets fit in a box almost the same size as a case of decent wine. The 905s are just about as much fun as a case of wine — and they last longer, too.

A tiny, bi-wirable two-way, this Danish five-litre 905 comes in a choice of black vinyl woodgrain or woodgrained vinyl which is black — but a genuine woodgrain finish is on the cards. It uses a 19mm fabric dome tweeter and a hand-made 130mm mid/bass drive unit connected to the outside world via a pair of gold-plated bi-wire terminals. The claimed sensitivity is 89dB which, coupled with a nominal impedance of eight Ohms and power handling of 70 Watts, means that it can be driven well with almost any amplifier.

Some hi-fi buffs may remember the classic Wharfedale *Diamonds* of the '80s. Along with many a fledgling enthusiast of the time, I cut my audio teeth on a pair of *Diamond* 2s. Although limited in a number of respects, the budget *Diamonds* never let go of the music, and allowed me to seriously upgrade turntables and amps over the years. These 905s share a great deal of that classic *Diamond* performance.

There is something nostalgic about the 905s. They kept

bringing me back to bedsit-land and Echo and the Bunnymen records playing into the wee small hours. And they lapped up almost all the music I tried on them, with a moderate bias away from classical music — more *Velvet Crush* than *Vivaldi*.

As you'd expect from a small box, deep and grunty bass ain't on the menu, but I think there's a slight upper-bass lift to hide the 905s limitations; not so obvious as to enforce heavy coloration on the speaker, but just enough to fill out the bass. This bass reinforcement is further enhanced by the filled single column stands, and by placing the speakers pretty close to a solid wall.

As an experiment, try the 905s with something like *No Protection* (the dub remix of Massive Attack's *Protection* CD), or the Vangelis soundtrack to *Blade Runner*. Both discs include the type of notes that cause serious intestinal disturbance to the listener, if you've got the right speaker. The 905 makes a valiant attempt at playing these deep notes, but at no time do you feel the air, or your bowels, move.

A small box generally images well, and the 905 is no exception. The image height is lacking completely, and there isn't much cavernous image depth,

