

PRO AUDIO REVIEW

Gear & Software Reviews For The End-User

Studio

Lipinski Sound L-3601 PowerStand

This unique speaker stand doubles as one of the best-sounding amps this reviewer has ever heard.

BY BOB KATZ, 10.15.2007

I was the first U.S. mastering engineer to own a pair of uncompromising, hair-raising Lipinski Sound L-707 loudspeakers (which I declared "tight, clean, dynamic and open" in the June 2004 PAR), which have since received numerous accolades. So it's no surprise that I'm looking at Lipinski amps and speakers for my Studio B (now under construction).

In Studio A, we have a Pass X250 Class A stereo power amplifier, which is heavy and hot. Looking for something conversely compact, I was very interested in auditioning Lipinski's new L-3601 PowerStand, a handsome integration of their Class D (PWM) monoblock L-301 amplifier and a 36-inch speaker stand, designed to put the tweeters at ear height for the most neutral frequency response. One of the attractions of Class D amps is that they run cool and draw no significant power line current at idle, which would make a considerable saving on my Florida electric and air conditioning bill compared with the

Pass Labs' constant 270 watts idle and 1,000 watts maximum. Though Class D amps have improved since 2004, when I rejected one in favor of the Pass, I decided to be skeptical but hopeful about the Lipinski.

Features

Each Lipinski L-301 monoblock has a single line input, either unbalanced on RCA or balanced on XLR. There is also a balanced and unbalanced line output suitable for feeding a subwoofer amp. Two independent 300-watt power amplifiers inside the monoblock can be run in biamp or bridged mode. In biamp mode, connect one amp to the tweeter and the other to the woofer for a total of 2 x 300 watts per channel; that is more than twice the rated power per channel of the Pass X250, though to my ears Class A power amps tend to deliver like AB and D amps of twice the rating. Lipinski does not recommend using bridged mode, as it reduces the damping factor; it should be reserved for high power PA applications, a single 600-watt amplifier per monoblock.



Fast Facts

Applications

Mastering studio, mixing and recording studio

Key Features

Class D (PWM) monoblock L-301 amplifier; 36-inch speaker stand; a single line input, either unbalanced on RCA or balanced on XLR and a balanced and unbalanced line output suitable for sub input

Price

\$2,995 (Monoblock L-301 amplifier, 2x300 watts), two for \$5,990; \$595 (L-360 stand without amplifier), two for \$1,190; \$3,590 (L-3601 powered stand), \$7,180 for two channels

Contact

Lipinski Sound | 916-273-9726 |
www.lipinskisound.com

PRODUCT POINTS

Plus

- * Pure, dimensional, tight, solid, grainless, extended sound
- * Deep, tight, extended bass and sound-stage
- * Amplifier can be used separate from the stands

Minus

- * Expensive
- * Semi-industrial metalwork

When the amps arrived, I was impressed by their light weight; I can lift one in each hand, but it takes two men or a forklift to move a single Pass X250. Each Lipinski amp has a clear Lucite plate covering an embossed logo. When powered, the front panel and logo can be illuminated in a variety of user-settable color schemes (or not if you prefer). It is a gimmick, but a very nice looking one. I set them to a copper-gold color, which looks, I must say, sexy; it gives the illusion of a gold plate reflecting the ambient light of the room. I give the look a big thumbs up. I wish I could say the same about the metalwork, which is "semi-industrial," and the back panel silkscreen labels are light gray on grainy gray metal.

Score

One of the best-sounding power amplifiers this reviewer has ever heard.

The object of powered stands is to combine the advantages of powered loudspeakers (short loudspeaker cables for lower resistance) with the advantages of separates (reduction in distortion due to microphonics). Andrew Lipinski says he has measured up to 10-percent vibration-induced distortion in some powered loudspeakers due to microphonics. Well, that won't happen with these, at least after I spent 15 minutes assembling each stand and an hour per stand filling the pipes with white sand from Home Depot. The sand reduced the resonance of the pipes considerably, but not completely. But in use I could not detect any sonic effect. Nevertheless, I recommend that Lipinski revisit the design of the tubes. I used four Dr. Scholl's round callus cushions on top of each stand to ensure good contact with the speakers (don't laugh). For bi-wiring, I built some three-foot lengths of custom speaker cable using Mogami 8-core 2.5 mm OFC speaker cable, using up all eight wires for an equivalent of better than 10 AWG and terminating in gold Atlona locking banana plugs.

In Use

Finally, after a two-day warm up period came the listening. I used the balanced XLR inputs to mate with my Crane Song Avocet (reviewed the December 2004 issue of PAR) and matched levels against the Pass to 0.1 dB using a Crane Song input attenuator. I recommend low gain mode, since high gain produces a slight but not bothersome hiss – audible only in a totally quiet room like mine but still to be avoided. At low gain with the L-707s, the hiss is only audible within a few feet.

Using my collection of 24-bit masters and playing through the Avocet's excellent DAC, I was immediately impressed with the sound. It's very musical, with a great midrange: pure and sweet but with an open top and a holographic, dimensional soundstage. The bottom end is extremely deep, tight and (I am astonished to say) more extended and solid than that of my Pass X250, which costs about three times as much! Soundstage width also slightly exceeds the Pass because dual mono amps mean better

channel separation. You can play these puppies as loud as you want without any distortion or harshness.

Summary

These are the best amplifiers I have heard in this room, beating (by far) the Bryston, Lexicon and Hafler, and now proving even marginally better than the physically more imposing Pass X250 (original model). Five of these will make an excellent set of uncompromised surround amps; unlike the Pass they'd probably perform from one 20-amp wall outlet, though I recommend two dedicated circuits when separate powered subwoofers are considered.

This amp uses a Second Generation Digital module, which Lipinski has integrated to get the best sonic performance. Andrew says he is not interested in building gear unless he can make it sound better than anyone else's: a bit of an ego statement, but I think the amp results speak for themselves. If this had been available two years ago, I would not have bought the Pass, regardless of impressive appearance. Luckily, they are now obtainable for my Studio B. These Lipinski PowerStands are definitely worthy of integration into the most exacting of studios.



Lipinski Sound Corporation
6120 Massachusetts Avenue
Bethesda, MD 20816
Tel. 301-229-4360
getinfo@lipinskisound.com
www.lipinskisound.com