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## Legacy Studio HD Passive Monitors

by John Gatski, 06.15.2008

**STORY TOOLBAR**


When I reviewed the first iteration of the Legacy Studio closefield monitors ten years ago, passive speakers in pro studios were still quite prevalent. Today, in a speaker world awash in powered monitors, the latest version of the non-powered Legacy Studio is a rare choice for studios.

The new Studio, priced at \$1,699 per pair, has been totally redesigned with new drivers and cabinet design. Legacy's primary market is the audiophiles, but high-end pros that choose the separate amp/speaker route have used the Studios and their larger brothers, the Classic and Focus, for the detailed, accurate monitoring.

Legacy has a few dealers nationwide but does much of its business via direct factory order with a generous return policy.

**Features**

The Studio HD is a compact-sized, closefield monitor that sports an 8-inch woofer with a cone woven from carbon graphite and silver thread, and a custom-designed 1-inch folded ribbon tweeter with a kapton diaphragm and neodymium magnet. The ported, B4-reflex cabinet, provides bass augmentation for the small 13-inches tall 10.5-inches wide and 10.8-inches deep cabinet, allowing the speakers to reach down to a claimed 42 Hz.

Overall specifications included a factory rated frequency response of 42 Hz – 22 kHz (plus, minus 2 dB). The crossover frequency is 2.8kHz. Power rating is listed at 25 watts to 300 watts continuous RMS. Impedance is rated at 4 ohms nominal.

The cabinet's internal bracing and ultra-dense hardwood housing make for an extremely inert package with no midrange or treble coloration. Finishes include walnut, cherry and black pebble. The angled edges and sloped front-to-back dimensions are said to enhance dispersion.

Cable connection is done via spade or banana plugs, and the speakers can be bi-amped or bi-wired by removing the jumpers from the four speaker posts. Two switches allow subtle reduction in the mid-bass and low treble to compensate for room and location effects on the sound — about -2 dB.

I set up the Studios in two different systems: a closefield setup with a Mac DAW and as a midfield monitoring rig in the middle of my room with a 16-channel analog console.

**In Use**

In the first configuration, I sat them on Apollo stands and angled them in slightly toward the listening position. They were powered with a couple of different amps, including the reference high-power, Bryston 14B SST bipolar output amplifier, the Pass X350.5 MOSFET output amplifier and my current favorite low-powered amp, the all-Class A Pass XA30.5.

I fed reference audio from my Apple G5's Lynx L22 sound card to either a Benchmark DAC1 or Lavry DA10 converter, which fed the analog balanced outputs of my Coda monitor preamp and then the amp. Interconnects included Kimber Cable and Alpha Core solid silver, two-conductor cables. I used the Alpha Core solid silver cables to interconnect the amp to the speakers.



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Legacy Studio HD

**Key Features**

Studio, project studio, audiophile Passive two-way B4-bass reflex design with 8-inch woofer and 1-inch ribbon tweeter, bi-wire terminals, 42 Hz to 22 kHz frequency response

**Price**

\$1,699

For reference, I also used the original Legacy Studios and the passive Lipinski L505s as well as my reference Legacy Focus 20/20s mid/farfield tower speakers.

**Contact**

Legacy Audio | 800-283-4644 |  
www.legacyaudio.com

On first listen, I could tell that the Legacy's did not need much break in. On 24-bit/96 kHz high resolution acoustic guitar recordings, the Studios sounded very natural with the accurate presence from a 1973 D35 Martin and my custom OO-28 fingerstyle guitar. Imaging was deep and wide with the complexity of the strums and plucks quite revealing without any harsh overtones. My initial listening notes contained the word "accurate" over and over.

The Studio HD is an excellent imaging speaker. I could hear a lot of treble cues spread very deep and wide in the mixes. Even compared to my Legacy Focus 20/20s towers with multiple drivers, the Studios were quite impressive in the amount of information they conveyed.

On jazz recordings, such as the DMP SACD Steve Davis "Quality of Your Silence" the ribbon tweeter had less of that seductive presence than the titanium dome of the original Studio — flatter sounding, but I believe it is more accurate.

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Transient response is quite good for such a reasonably priced speaker. Drum cymbals reflect the speed and air of a well recorded setup, without a hint of harshness or over-splashiness — just like it sounds in the session.

High-resolution piano recordings also revealed no exaggerated character or harshness in the upper register with the precise transients that quality piano mics are able to capture.

Another positive of this ribbon tweeter is its lack of extra sibilance you often hear on female vocals from some metal or soft dome drivers. This speaker shines on vocals with no exaggeration; what you hear is what you have on the recording.

The other characteristic I noticed was the good, unexaggerated bass for such small speakers. I measured test tones to 55 Hz that were just a few dB off the 1 kHz reference tone in my room. The original Studios had good bass, but there was some mid-to-upper bass enhancement in its tuning to help out the small driver/cabinet configuration. The latest version's woofer allows a flatter bass response.

The treble and bass tilt switches offer a little bit of fine tuning for spaces that may be a bit more live or have mid-bass build up when placed close to wall. I found they sounded a bit more open in the flat position, but the effect is subtle.

For the pop music engineer, the Legacy Studio HD can be played loud without hurting your ears. Using a really good Class A or A/B amp with really good passive speakers offers clean sound that many mass-produced powered monitor combos do not. I have heard many powered monitors that sound good at low-to-moderate levels, but produce a bit of harsh sonic haze and edge when cranked up. You can't listen like that for very long.

I also tried the Studio HDs out in the middle of the room as a midfield monitor to see how it projected the sound from 7 to 8 feet. It was not as effective as the much bigger, Legacy Focus, but it was as effective as the standalone Lipinski L505s with more low bass. The Lipinkis need a subwoofer for any bass under 75 Hz.

As for negatives with this monitor, I had none. It sounds great, it looks good, it's easy to place and offers the flexibility of choosing your own amp. The only negative is that Legacy is an order-only company and you can't march down to your local dealer and get a quick audition. You get a 30-day audition with a money back guarantee and free pickup if you don't like them ... and I'm doubtful that you wouldn't like them.

Summary

For those facilities where great closefield speaker accuracy is desired and the pocketbook does not mind plunking extra coin for a good old fashioned amplifier, the Legacy Studio HDs are hard to beat. The deal gets better if you already have a good amp sitting in the gear closet.

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Recommended Studio Amps

Whenever I do a passive studio speaker review, I am always asked for amplifier recommendations. With powered speakers the dominant players these days, the pros have fewer choices, but if you look into the hi-fi market, companies there are still building plenty of amps to choose from and the features really are not different from the pro amps.

- **Bryston** — Long-time Canadian amp manufacturer still makes some of the most versatile, accurate sounding amps with pro features. If you don't need gobs of power, I would try the Bryston 4B SST at 300 wpc, priced at \$3,499. The 14B SST, priced at \$5,900, will power most any speakers for big rooms — with more than 600 wpc on tap.  
Contact: [www.bryston.ca](http://www.bryston.ca)
- **Hot House** — Richard Rose and Co. are still making pro and hi-fi amps. The standard standby SV Stereo 400 (200 wpc) is a nice-sounding amp, priced at \$2,299.  
Contact: [www.hothousepro.com](http://www.hothousepro.com)
- **Pass Labs** — Nelson Pass of Threshold fame has been producing his namesake line since the early 1990s. The

MOSFET XA and X series are the best for the pros. They are not cheap, but I like the X350.5 (\$9,500) for medium and big speaker rooms, and the \$5,000 XA 30.5 for closefield setups.

Contact: [www.passlabs.com](http://www.passlabs.com)

- **Legacy/Coda PowerBloc** — Legacy sells an OEM bipolar amplifier, produced by amp/preamp manufacturer Coda, rated at 300 wpc. I own two Coda preamps and have used the Coda amps. Transparent and analytical. \$3,800.  
Contact: [www.legacyaudio.com](http://www.legacyaudio.com)
- **Lipinski Sound** — The clever, in-stand design L-301 make Lipinski's and other speakers come alive. They feature bridged mono (600 w) stereo 300 wpc or parallel power modes and are priced at \$4,000 each.  
Contact: [www.lipinkisound.com](http://www.lipinkisound.com)
- **Parasound** — The NewClassic line of Parasound amps are still sleepers with their lower cost and good sounding Class A/B bipolar output. I like the two channel Model 2250 (250 W) as well as the five-channel Model 5125 for small 5.1 rooms.  
Contact: [www.parasound.com](http://www.parasound.com)
- **Monster Cable** — That's right folks. Monster Cable's big MOSFET 250 wpc amp, Model MPA-2250, priced at \$2,499 is one pretty sounding amp that has plenty of headroom. In fact, a LA mix engineer turned me on to the amp.  
Contact: [www.monstercable.com](http://www.monstercable.com)
- **Behringer** — Bang for your buck is Behringer's A500 160 wpc traditional Class A/B bipolar output amp. Not in the league of the Pass or Bryston, but pretty darn good for a couple of hundred bucks. Shockingly good.  
Contact: [www.behringer.com](http://www.behringer.com)

— John Gatski

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