

Definitive Technology Mythos Four Speaker System

The totally bearable lightness of being a Mythos

“They will eat for lunch just about any other system in the price range”



BY DARRYL WILKINSON

So I was chatting with Paris

Hilton the other day about some arcane aspect of cosmic string theory (OK, all aspects of cosmic string theory are arcane to me)

when it suddenly hit me: The slender, silvery beauty of Definitive Technology's Mythos speakers might actually be a drawback. I was so disturbed by this realization that, using ancient Latin with such eloquence it would have brought tears to Cicero's eyes, I cancelled our date to go shopping for the latest opera releases on SACD, returned the new issue of *Foreign Affairs* that I'd borrowed from her, and headed home to drink a seaweed-and-algae smoothie while meditating on the problem.

There's simply no doubt about it. The Mythos speakers that Def Tech sent me for review—floorstanding Mythos Fours for the mains, a

Mythos Three for the center, and a pair of never-before-seen-by-normal-humans Mythos Gems for the surrounds, plus a SuperCube II subwoofer—were drop-dead gorgeous. I'm talking stunning, can't-get-them-out-of-your-mind, wouldn't-kick-them-out-of-bed-for-eating-Limburger-cheese-and-Wassacrispbread gorgeous.

“perfectly proportioned ... built to appease the gods of great sound and stylish décor”

The Mythos Four exudes class and style as it presses upward from its elegant glass base. It soars toward the ceiling like a refined cathedral spire built to appease the gods of great sound and stylish décor. The sylphlike horizontal Mythos Three rested lightly atop my TV, looking for all of the world as if it were only temporarily reclining and might, at any moment, choose to soar upward, as well. The Mythos Gems, about as perfectly

proportioned as tiny speakers can be, beckoned from their perches in the back of the room.

“The system’s blending of bass and beauty is quite astounding”

There’s no law of physics nor any pending Constitutional amendment that I’m aware of declaring that speakers must look average at best and toad’s-butt ugly if at all possible. But our collective puritanical background subconsciously forces most red-blooded Americans to be highly suspicious of any component that even has a whiff of style about it (Apple’s iPod being a giant—or, more accurately, a tiny—exception to the rule). Our feelings run much the same with people. Geeky nerds aren’t expected to be the best dressed guys at the lunch buffet; and, well, I don’t really think Paris Hilton reads *Foreign Affairs*, either.

“pinpoint accuracy, incredibly intimate detail ... in a word: three-dimensional and thrilling”

Some misguided people are going to dismiss these Mythos beauties as just another collection of pretty faces with no substance to them—and they’d be wrong. Stultifyingly wrong. If Def Tech had just jumped on the rapidly moving lifestyle bandwagon and simply crammed a few basic drivers inside a cabinet cosmetically tailored to

appeal to the flat-panel TV-buying crowd, then none of this would matter. The fact is that, while Def Tech most admittedly designed these speakers around a contemporary cosmetic concept, they also used their engineering prowess

to breathe silky sonic life into their creation.

No Peaking

Here’s an example of what I’m talking about. Def Tech engineered the Mythos Fours, Threes, and

AT A GLANCE DEFINITIVE TECHNOLOGY MYTHOS FOUR SPEAKER SYSTEM



These listings are based on the manufacturer’s stated specs; the HT Labs box below indicates the gear’s performance on our test bench.

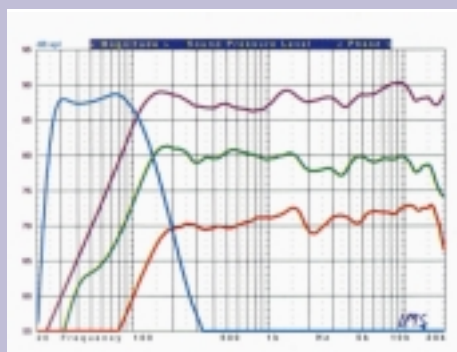
SUBWOOFER: SUPERCUBE II

Connections:	Speaker- and line-level ins and outs, LFE in
Enclosure type:	Passive radiator (two, 8 inches)
Woofer (size in inches, type):	8, long-throw polymer
Power Rating (watts):	1,250
Crossover Bypass:	Yes
Available Finishes:	Piano Black Gloss
Dimensions (H x W x D, inches):	12.5 by 12 by 12
Weight (pounds):	38
Price:	\$899

SPEAKER:

	Mythos Four	Mythos Three	Mythos Gem
Type:	2.5 way, tower	Two-way, center	Two-way, monitor
Tweeter (size in inches, type):	1, aluminum dome	1, aluminum dome	1, aluminum dome
Woofer (size in inches, type):	4.5, cast basket (4)	4.5, cast basket (2)	3.5, wide dispersion (2)
Radiator (size in inches, type):	4.5, planar bass (2)	4.5, planar bass (2)	N/A
Nominal Impedance (ohms):	4–8	4–8	4–8
Recommended Amp Power (watts):	20–225	10–200	10–200
Available Finishes:	Silver or Black	Silver or Black	Silver or Black
Dimensions (H x W x D, inches):	44 by 5.19 by 5.13	5.4 by 25.1 by 4.2	10.25 by 4.25 by 4.125
Weight (pounds):	24	15	5
Price:	\$699	\$499	\$249

HT Labs Measures: Definitive Technology Mythos Four Speaker System



Mythos Four L/R Sensitivity:

87.5 dB from 500 Hz to 2 kHz

Mythos Three Center Sensitivity:

89 dB from 500 Hz to 2 kHz

Mythos Gem Surround Sensitivity:

87 dB from 500 Hz to 2 kHz

This graph shows the quasi-anechoic (employing close-miking of all woofers) frequency response of the Mythos Four L/R (purple trace), SuperCube II sub (blue trace), Mythos Three center (green trace), and Mythos Gem surround (red trace). All passive loudspeakers were measured at a distance

of 1 meter with a 2.83-volt input and scaled for display purposes.

The Mythos Four’s listening-window response (a five-point average of axial and +/-15-degree horizontal and vertical responses) measures +2.77/-1.26 dB from 200 Hz to 10 kHz. The -3dB point is at 104 Hz, and the -6dB point is at 90 Hz. Impedance reaches a minimum of 4.82 ohms at 267 Hz and a phase angle of -30.34 degrees at 162 Hz.

The Mythos Three’s listening-window response measures +0.95/-2.91 dB from 200 Hz to 10 kHz. An average of axial and +/-15-degree horizontal responses measures +0.97/-2.98 dB from 200 Hz to 10 kHz. The -3dB point is at 122 Hz, and the -6dB point is at 106 Hz. Impedance reaches a minimum of 3.96 ohms at 251 Hz and a phase angle of -46.45 degrees at 158 Hz.

The Mythos Gem’s listening-window response measures +1.52/-2.17 dB from 200 Hz to 10 kHz. The -3dB point is at 162 Hz, and the -6dB is at 134 Hz. Impedance reaches a minimum of 4.68 ohms at 343 Hz and a phase angle of -51.06 degrees at 183 Hz.

The SuperCube II’s close-miked response, normalized to the level at 80 Hz, indicates that the lower -3dB point is at 27 Hz and the -6dB point is at 25 Hz. The upper -3dB point is at 110 Hz when using the LEF input. — MJP

Gems (plus the Mythos Twos, which the company sent me before they had a pair of Gems ready for me to listen to) with the intention that there would be a subwoofer in the system, so there's no midbass peak designed into the speakers. Some manufacturers use this trick to fool the listener into thinking there's bass where there is none. In addition to detrimentally altering the sonic balance, such a peak makes it more difficult to smoothly integrate the speakers with a subwoofer.

“The SuperCube II trounces most under-\$1,000 subwoofers”

That's a rather bold step because, if you put these speakers on a demo wall in a store and compare them with another speaker that's been voiced with a peak in the midbass,

your first reaction is likely to be that the Mythos are a little thin and weak, rather than highly accurate and neutral. But, here again, your thinking would be going in the wrong direction. Add a subwoofer, such as the SuperCube II, and—like a rich socialite with a dark past—these mild-mannered, highly refined beauties turn into adrenaline-pumping, take-no-prisoners competitors that will eat for lunch (belch included) just about any other system in the price range.

The system's blending of bass and beauty is quite astounding. I've rarely run into a combination where it was so easy to match the subwoofer to the speakers—or a combination that sounded so natural together. It's as if they were made for each other (which, now that I mention it, they were).

If you've long been a fan of Def Tech's bipolar speakers, this Mythos system has a slightly dif-

HIGHLIGHTS

- Mythos beauty is more than skin deep
- Gems utilize wide-dispersion bipolar array
- Music and movies are equally stunning

“worthy of hanging in the Louvre ... some of the easiest speakers to integrate in a real living room”

ferent sonic character than you might be used to, largely because the Mythos speakers feature a forward-radiating design, not a bipolar one. As a result, the soundstage isn't as big as that of the larger bipolar towers. There's something here that's equally as

DEFINITIVE TECHNOLOGY MYTHOS FOUR SPEAKER SYSTEM					OVERALL RATING
Build Quality	Value	Features	Performance	Ergonomics	96
Polystone, non-resonant front baffles Aircraft-grade aluminum cabinets with interal ribbing and camping pads	In this price range, you normally get either style or substance; the Mythos gives you both The SuperCube II trounces most under-\$1,000 subwoofers	Wall-mount brackets are included with the Mythos Three and Mythos Gem The Mythos Gem has a prethreaded insert for the option pivoting wall mount	Pinpoint accuracy, incredibly intimate detail Bass is extremely convincing The subwoofer blends phenomenally with the other speakers	Slender silos and wall-mounting options make these some of the easiest speakers to integrate into a real living room It's easy to reach the SuperCube II's controls	
96	94	93	97	98	
General information					The Mythos system is not only one of the best sub-\$3,500 systems on the market, it's one of the most stylish and attractive systems, too.
Mythos Four Tower Speaker, \$699		Mythos Three Center-Channel Speaker, \$499			
Mythos Gem Surround Speaker, \$249		SuperCube II Subwoofer, \$899			
Definitive Technology, (410) 363-7148, www.definitivetech.com					Dealer Locator Code DEF

appealing, though. The Mythos are so intimate in their imaging and precise in their reproduction that they create a sonic portrait with such subtlety and sincerity that, if you could somehow freeze forever such an audible moment, it would be worthy of hanging in the Louvre.

“Music and movies are equally stunning”

The cabinets’ narrowness, the lack of parallel sides, the excellent internal damping, the PolyStone mineral-filled polymer front baffles, the specially annealed aluminum dome tweeters with silk surrounds, and the Medite planar bass radiators that refuse to let midrange frequencies bleed into the room combine to provide the unfettered, thoroughly unencumbered lightness of being a Mythos speaker. But what it really boils down to is this: How do these slender silos sound when you plunk them on the floor or pop them on the wall next to your plasma? In a word: three-dimensional and thrilling. Well, that was three words, but you get what I mean.

Strong yet Subtle

The underlying nature of the Mythos Fours, Threes, and Gems (which, by the way, also fared quite well as main speakers when I paired them with the SuperCube II sub-woofer) is a subtle sweetness and unerring accuracy. The sonic blend of the bass with the midrange vocals, guitars, and harmonica on

Blues Traveler’s *Truth Be Told* DVD-Audio disc is a great example of this; at the same time, the ensemble flawlessly reproduced the maniacally defined antics found on Chesky’s *Musical 5.1 Surround Show* SACD. In fact, if you don’t think these speakers have what it takes to run with the ugliest but best sounding speakers in the price range, listen to “Music for Cello, Helicopter and Cars” on the Chesky disc. If the system is dialed-in properly, it’ll change your opinion of how good a lifestyle product should be.

“drop-dead gorgeous. I’m talking stunning, can’t get-them-out-of-your-mind”

All of the aspects that make music sound so good achieve similar results with movies. *Master & Commander* was much more than I bargained for with this system — especially early in the movie, when you’re lulled into calm by the creaking of the ship and the breaking of the waves just before a hell storm of cannon shots is released. These Mythos are no passive wall-flowers, let me tell you. *Seabiscuit*, a much less rambunctious movie that relies on subtlety of sound and narration as a large part of its story, was just as engagingly portrayed and just as enjoyable.

Hopefully, the Mythos are an early indication of a paradigm shift in the way manufacturers and con-

sumers think about how products should perform and fit into our lives. I, for one, am certainly ready for this shift. Even if other manufacturers don’t follow Def Tech’s lead, this system is still a mighty fine-sounding and damn good-looking group of speakers.



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