

YG Acoustics Cairn stand-mount loudspeaker

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YG Acoustics has been producing world-class loudspeakers for over twenty years. Founded in 2002, the Arvada, Colorado firm has continued to improve upon its classic aluminium enclosures and non-ported approach to speaker design.

It has also survived the gauntlet of passing the torch from its founder to a new management team led by CEO Dr. Matthew Webster. He and his team had the challenge of continuing to improve upon already world class award winning designs. They have taken on this challenge in a number of ways including adding an entirely new line of speakers called The Peaks which includes two stand-mounts, three floorstanding models and one subwoofer that occupy a new entry priced range in the YG stable. The team has also revamped the reference line including the introduction of the new XX3 ultimate performance loudspeaker at the top of the line.

Speaking with Dr. Webster at the factory in Arvada, Co. he spoke about being a fan of the original YG's and owning their Reference XV Studio model himself. He spoke often as an engineer to the YG team about ideas for improvements. When an opportunity arose for his company Cambridge Acoustic Sciences (CAS) to collaborate with YG Acoustics in 2020 he was eager to do so. CAS brought with it a significant array of computer modeling and measurement expertise along with years of background in materials sciences. CAS also excelled at modeling electronics and physical systems allowing YG to test via computers a wide array of system iterations before spending money on expensive prototypes. In 2022 a merger of CAS and YG under the YG Acoustics name was completed with Dr. Webster at the helm.

Capital investments were made vastly increasing production capacity, staff and space. Industry veterans were added such as Steve Huntley from Boulder Amplifiers and Duncan Taylor from PS Audio alongside the existing world class YG team.



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» A new Era

Launching a new era at a well known brand encompasses so much capital and effort. Unveiling a new flagship, at \$225,000, is certain to get the attention of the audio press. So naturally, in the midst of all this, I am going to focus on the smallest member of the Peaks line, The Cairn stand-mount speaker.

The Cairn is a modest sized two-way passive speaker weighing in at 12.5kg each. At 370 x 192 x 262mm (HxWxD) they are easily placed in most any small to medium sized room. Available in three finishes, Balanced Oak, Flamed Rosewood and Datuk Ebony they will blend nicely with most décor. The front of the Cairn (and all Peaks Line

speakers) is milled aluminium, the rest of the cabinets is made from an inert inch-thick resin fibre. The fibre is shaped to spec in Europe by top woodshops achieving as inert a cabinet as possible allowing the drivers and DualCoherent 2 crossovers to shape the sound as designed by YG Acoustics. The ForgeCore Tweeter made famous by YG is used and the 15cm BilletCore Driver is machined in house from solid blocks of high quality aluminium.

I was able to watch as the technician took a fresh block of aluminium and create a new driver cone. The precision is impressive on the German Portatec milling machines resulting in a light and stiff cone that is incredibly responsive. All waste materials are recycled.





I am listening to the smallest and least expensive of the YG Acoustics family. The Cairns have the same attention to detail and adherence to quality as any other YG speaker.

» days I would consider this as a nice option and glad it is available. One other caveat, the Cairns are 86dB sensitive. I spent time with them using my Cary Audio CAD 300-SEI Class A tube amp and its 15 wpc. At lower volumes it was a sweet combo but there were limits. The 500 wpc Class AB Sanders proved to be a more flexible amp for them.

Next up was Duran Duran's power ballad 'Ordinary World' from their *Wedding Album* (1993 Capitol). This song has a lot of depth and layers. Speakers that can resolve the detail from within the milieu are few and far between. The Cairns handled things with aplomb. Simon LeBon's vocals soar above the guitars and keyboards allowing the emotional nuance to shine through. Songs with sweeping scale can be a lot for a small stand-mount but the Cairns were up to the task brilliantly. 'Ordinary World' is an all-time hit for the band and one of my favourites. It was a treat hearing this presentation. I had the volume up and the excursion capabilities of the BilletCore driver was as impressive as it was fast. The pairing with the ForgeCore tweeter was seamless and showcased the proficiency of these mighty little speakers.

Soundtracks provide some great one off tracks and Ed Sheeran's 'I See Fire' from *The Hobbit Desolation of Smaug* (2013 Watertower Music) is a good example. A simple production with acoustic guitar vocals and percussion the song is delivered in an almost hushed style. The delicate plucking of fingers on nylon strings is nearly three dimensional as Ed delivers this heart felt song. The Cairns ability to deliver vocals is outstanding and are one of the best I have heard in my listening room. Clear and lifelike the song is delivered with great space and dimensionality. Given the song's topic it has an almost "sitting around the campfire" feel to it. That sense of intimacy is rare and a treasured commodity when spending time enjoying a night of music. Perhaps only a reviewer considers the value of a well-designed crossover while listening, but this type of track reveals it to me. Dual Coherent 2 indeed.

Staying with the vocal theme, I put on Alison Krauss title track 'Forget About it' (1999 Rounders Records). Alison has about as pure a voice as I have heard since Karen Carpenter. This self-produced album shows that voice off well as she sings this song about loss and regret. Framed by acoustic guitar and dobro the depth and clarity is palpable. Many of her solo and Union Station albums capture this quality and a first class system fronted by topflight speakers reveals this extensivity. Listening sessions like this provide for me one of the great joys in auditioning

new world class gear. Sitting back I remind myself I am listening to the smallest and least expensive of the YG Acoustics family. The Cairns have had the same attention to detail and adherence to quality as any other YG speaker.

Enjoyment, not investment

Thinking back to my interview with Dr. Webster a few things came to mind. First, his belief that you are paying for enjoyment and not an investment. He did not want to queue up music and be looking at a portfolio. He wanted to be present and in the moment with his music and not thinking about what was spent on the system. (Take that Alan Parsons!) Next, he said he wanted to focus on real world circumstances and build speakers that do not require absolutely perfect rooms or placement and still sound world class. Certainly you can tweak but do not obsess over the last millimeter. (We will still do that because we cannot help it.) Lastly, how excited he was to bridge together his professional work with his audio passion.

I like where he was coming from. Regardless how much is spent on speakers or a system when your friends leave and it is just you and your gear, are you happy? Does your system take the days stress away and let you relax and let the memories scroll through your mind to your favourite soundtrack for the day? I am confident if you add a pair of YG Acoustic Cairns to your system, they will do that for you. A musical conduit to your personal soundtrack. If you are searching for a small stand-mount speaker I cannot recommend them more highly. Audition a pair and let me know if you agree. +

Technical specifications

Type: 2-way passive stand mount/bookshelf speaker

Dedicated stand available

Drivers: ForgeCore tweeter, 15cm (6") BilletCore driver

Frequency Response: 40Hz – 40kHz

Impedance: Average 8 Ohms, Minimum 3.9 Ohms

Sensitivity: 86dB

Dimensions: 14.6 x 7.6 x 10.3" (H x W x D)

370 x 192 x 262mm (H x W x D)

Weight: 28lbs each, 12.5kg each

Price: £9,900/\$8,500, Stands £1,950/\$1,500

Manufacturer YG Acoustics

🌐 www.yg-acoustics.com