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Definitive Technology

Mythos STS SuperTower / Mythos Nine / Mythos Gem Home-Theater Speaker System

Last year, for *SoundStage!*, I reviewed the outstanding Definitive Technology Mythos STS Super Tower loudspeakers (\$1499 USD each). In fact, the Mythos was so outstanding that we awarded it a SoundStage! Network Product of the Year award for Aesthetics and Sound. So when the matching Mythos Nine center-channel speaker (\$799) was introduced and it became possible to review a full surround-sound speaker system based on the Mythos STS, I didn't hesitate to request a sample.

The system reviewed here is rounded out by the Mythos Gem surround speaker (\$279 each), for a total system price of \$4355. Granted, that's still a sizable sum, but many surround-sound systems based on high-performance speakers cost much more. And, as I found out last year, the Mythos STS wouldn't be out of place in a super-high-quality two-channel system.

Description

One of the unique features of the Mythos STS is its powered woofer section, which Definitive Technology claims is equivalent to one of their SuperCube subwoofers. I can't say for sure — I didn't have a SuperCube on hand for comparison — but I can tell you that the Mythos STS has simply amazing bass output for a relatively small and moderately priced speaker. In fact, it would take a pretty substantial subwoofer to surpass the quantity *and* quality of bass that the Mythos STS provides in reproducing the additional bass of the LFE or “.1” channel. And that comes with the advantages of lower price and not having to find somewhere to stash a sub.

The system's curved aluminum enclosures, available in silver or gloss-black finish, are striking in appearance. None of these speakers would be out of place in a room fashionably furnished in modern décor, and their small size and lack of a separate sub means that they won't physically dominate a room, as do many surround systems. If you're looking for a stylish, tasteful speaker system to

accompany a flat-panel TV, the Mythos system is certainly attractive enough. But don't let these speakers' fine appearance fool you — there's a lot more to them than good looks.

The Mythos STS and Mythos Nine center speaker use Def Tech's latest 1" dome tweeter of pure aluminum, which has an acoustically contoured faceplate



to aid dispersion. Both speakers also have two 4.5" bass/midrange drivers with mineral-filled mono-polymer cones that feature the company's Balanced Double Surround System (BDSS), a technology in which the cone is supported by surrounds on its outer *and* inner edges; this is said to provide greater and more linear excursion.

The Mythos Nine also has two 4.5" x 8" racetrack-shaped passive low-bass radiators acoustically coupled to its bass/midrange drivers in a sealed enclosure. All of the drivers are mounted on a PolyStone baffle; this and the heavy aluminum construction result in an incredibly solid and inert speaker. The Mythos Nine, which can be mounted vertically or horizontally (in the latter orientation it measures 28.0"W x 5.4"H x 4.2"D), comes with a wall-mount bracket and adjustable foot. A single set of gold-plated binding posts are provided on the rear panel.

The Mythos STS SuperTower has a similarly solid aluminum enclosure, but is designed as a floorstander (it measures 47.5"H x 5.5"W x 8.5"D) with an attractive granite base that can be outfitted with metal spikes or plastic inserts. Its 5" x 10" powered "racetrack" woofer is acoustically coupled to two 5" x 10" passive low-bass radiators, and all three are in their own sealed enclosure in the cabinet's lower portion. The woofer is driven by a 300W class-D amplifier with a standard IEC power cord. There's an output-level control for the bass on the back of the STS, along with a single set of binding posts, and an RCA jack that can be connected to the subwoofer output of an A/V receiver or processor.

The Mythos Gem surround speaker's single 1" pure-aluminum dome tweeter is situated between its two 3.5" bass/midrange drivers, the upper one angled slightly to the right, the lower angled to the left — which makes the Gem a bipolar design. The compact Gem (10.3"H x 4.1"W x 4.3"D) can be placed on a wall with the included steel mounting plate or optional pivoting brackets. Matching aluminum and glass stands are available.

Setup

The Mythos STS SuperTower's powered woofer section makes possible several different setups. The RCA line-level input



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can be used to send an LFE signal directly to the powered woofer. Using the bass management of your A/V processor or receiver, you could send the bass from any or all of the channels directly to the woofer section via the line-level input. You could also ignore the speaker's LFE input and connect only the speaker-level input, sending a full-range signal to the Mythos STS and letting the speaker's crossover shunt bass to its woofer section.

After some experimentation, I found that the simplest method — connecting only the speaker-level inputs — didn't sound much different from connecting the additional low-level input and sending bass information directly to the powered woofer section. You may get different results in your room, or simply enjoy the added flexibility of using the line-level inputs, but I didn't find it necessary. I also found that setting the crossover at 80 or 90Hz made the system sound its best in my room: that's when the bass from *all* the speakers blended most smoothly.

The Mythos Nine was shallow enough to be placed on the edge of my TV stand, in front of my 56" rear projector. I used its adjustable foot to angle it slightly upward. I set the Mythos Gems atop my custom-built, 5'-high surround-speaker stands — they looked minuscule on the stands' 1'-square bases. The Mythos STSes were placed just slightly in front of and to the sides of my RPTV and slightly toed in.

Performance

The sound of the Mythos STS-based system was exceptionally clean and detailed, with a surprising dynamic range well suited to bombastic movie soundtracks. The opening chase scene of the latest James Bond movie, *Quantum of Solace*, immediately plunges you into the action, and the Mythos STS system delivered all the excitement to be expected from a top-flight home-theater speaker array. The crashes on the soundtrack of this Blu-ray edition were appropriately loud and jarring, yet the machine-gun fire remained extremely clear, the firing of each

round easily discernible and sounding realistic, not overblown. The screeching of tires, wailing of sirens, and shattering of glass all combined in a symphony of chaos that was a thrill to listen to through the Def Tech system.

Later, in the film's opera scene, the Mythos STS system demonstrated its ability to fully surround me with music. Whether at lower volumes or at full orchestral level, the music remained well integrated with the sound effects and was totally immersive. During the closing titles, the iconic Bond theme entered with startling intensity but remained crystal clear. These speakers' power handling, even with the very vigorous horn section and strings, was amazing, and the instruments imaged precisely within the soundstage as individual entities. The multitrack mix of this recording is undoubtedly totally artificial and unlike any live orchestral recording I've ever heard, but it was nonetheless captivating and precisely reproduced by the Mythos system.

The soundtrack of *Slumdog Millionaire* doesn't have quite the visceral impact of *Quantum of Solace*, but through the Mythos STS system the film's music was effortlessly integrated and immediately involving. Even without a separate subwoofer, the system exhibited an impressive tautness on the drums in "O... Saya." Each drumstroke was well defined, and emanated with equal authority from each speaker. A plane roars overhead at the beginning of this song, and the seamless pan from the front to the back of the soundstage was impressive in its realism, even from the tiny Mythos Gems. The flowing vocals of "Latika's Theme" and "Dreams On Fire" were absolutely dazzling; the Mythos system made this exemplary soundtrack sound like an audiophile multichannel music recording.

The Mythos STS SuperTower's performance with two-channel music recordings is nothing less than spectacular — this, after all, is why we gave it a *SoundStage!* Reviewers' Choice Award. In Cassandra Wilson's covers

of Yes's "Fragile" and Van Morrison's "Tupelo Honey," from *Closer To You: The Pop Side* (CD, Blue Note 5099969608728), her voice was full of the expressiveness that can be conveyed only by a genuinely high-performance speaker. The arrangements on Bruce Springsteen's *Working on a Dream* (CD, Columbia 41355) can sometimes sound a bit congested, but the Mythos STS was able to unravel even the muted vocals and instrumentation on "Life Itself," and simpler arrangements — such as the acoustic guitar and piano on "The Wrestler" — were joys to hear.

No matter what I played, the Mythos STS-based system always provided a satisfying and articulate musical experience, with sound that was incredibly smooth from top to bottom. It lacked only a touch of sparkle and liquidity in the treble, and a slight bit of bass extension, both normally found only in far more expensive systems. Other than that, the Def Tech system was nearly impossible to fault.

Comparison

The Mythos STS SuperTower / Mythos Nine / Mythos Gem trio is probably the only lifestyle system that I would even consider using without a subwoofer. If you don't have the space for a sub, or simply don't want one in your living room, this system is for you. That said, the Mythos STS-based system would still benefit from the addition of a good subwoofer. Although its bass was always tight and well defined, there were times when I thought it could have used some more bass extension and volume.

My reference system comprises much larger and more expensive (when still available) speakers from Paradigm Reference — the Signature S8 mains (\$6000/pair), Signature C3 center channel (\$1500 each), two Servo-15 v.2 subwoofers (\$2500 each) — as well as Mirage Omni 260 surrounds (\$1000/pair). The opening scene of *Blade II* on DVD contains an ominous subsonic tone that the Mythos STS system could not reproduce at room-filling levels. My Paradigm-Mirage



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system was better able to energize my room with this tone. However, in chapter 10, "House of Pain," the bass of the techno score is more in the audible range, and the Mythos STS system believably re-created the rock-solid beat of this macabre dance-club scene.

I found the coherence of the entire Mythos system to be at least as good as or better than that of my reference system. The timbral matching of the front and rear speakers was especially notable in scenes from *The Wrestler* in which the crowd's cheers and jeers created an especially enveloping effect. I was very impressed by the ability of the tiny Mythos Gems to keep up with the much larger Mythos STS mains and Mythos Nine center. Closing my eyes, I would never have guessed that such a big, enveloping sound was emanating from such small surround speakers. The Mythos STS speakers

were also slightly more transparent overall than my references. Their midrange clarity, especially, made voices particularly enticing; I often found myself preferring to listen to two-channel music recordings through the Def Tech system.

And let's not forget just how compact the Mythos STS system is. The Gem surround is much smaller than most bookshelf or surround speakers, and the Mythos Nine center is only a few inches high and deep. Even the relatively tall Mythos STS SuperTower has a very small footprint. This system will almost disappear in a room, both visually and aurally; it sounded way bigger than it looks, with a coherent and seamless soundstage that must be heard to be believed.

Conclusion

The Mythos STS speakers comprise a compact system with striking looks and astonishing performance at a reasonable price. To my mind, there is currently nothing else on the market quite like the Mythos STS SuperTowers, or this surround system based on them. These eye-catching loudspeakers give up very little in the way of performance to more conventional-looking designs, and in most respects are at the pinnacle of performance for speakers in this price range.

... Roger Kanno

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REVIEW SYSTEM

Receiver	Paradigm Reference Signature S8 (mains), Paradigm Reference Signature C3 (center), Paradigm Reference Servo-15 v.2 (2 subwoofers), Mirage Omni 260 (surrounds)
A/V processor	Anthem Statement D2
Amplifiers	Bel Canto e.One REF1000 and eVo6
Sources	Oppo DV-970HD SACD/CD/DVD-A/V player, Sony PlayStation 3, Trends Audio UD-10.1 USB converter
Cables	Analysis Plus, DH Labs, Essential Sound Products
Surge suppressor	ZeroSurge 1MOD15WI
Display device	JVC HD-56FC97 RPTV

DESCRIPTION

Model: Mythos STS SuperTower floorstanding speaker

Price: \$1499 USD each

Dimensions: 47.5"H x 5.5"W x 8.5"D

Weight: 54 pounds each

Model: Mythos Nine center-channel speaker

Price: \$799 USD

Dimensions: 28.0"W x 5.4"H x 4.2"D

Weight: 13 pounds

Model: Mythos Gem surround speaker

Price: \$279 USD each

Dimensions: 10.3"H x 4.1"W x 4.3"D

Weight: 4 pounds each

System price: \$4355 USD

Warranty: Five years on loudspeaker drivers, crossovers, and cabinets; three years on amplifier electronics

FEATURES

Curved aluminum enclosures

Polished silver or gloss-black finish

PolyStone baffle and contoured faceplate for tweeter

Racetrack-shaped bass drivers and/or passive radiators (STS and Nine)

Dual BDSS midrange drivers (STS, Nine)

300W powered woofer section (STS)

Line-level LFE input (STS)

Polished granite base (STS)

Wall-mount plates (Nine, Gem)

Bipolar radiation pattern (Gem)

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