

Review of Lonpoo LP42M Loudspeakers

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The Lonpoo LP42M loudspeaker is a very interesting model indeed by way of its notable versatility. Attach a high quality CD player and you have an instant high quality hi-fi system with enough power to easily fill an average size room. Place a high quality DAC between them and attach the output via an optical or co-axial connection and you might have an even better custom system. An optical lead is even supplied for the direct connection of digital products. A high quality digital audio player (DAP) might also have such a connection. If this doesn't suit your music setup, there are also Bluetooth and USB connections.

However there is another possibility and that is to connect a device via a line input on phono sockets. It is in this latter context that the loudspeakers are reviewed here as this makes them perfect as mini studio monitors to attach directly to an audio mixer or to a DAC connected to a computer for musical composition via an appropriate software package. For this review they were connected to the line outputs of a Behringer U-phoria DAC which was connected to a Lenovo laptop with 16GB of RAM and an

Intel i5 processor. The software chosen was both the popular Ableton Live application which has a good quality audio engine, and the excellent Acoustica Premium Edition audio editor. All files used were sampled at 48kHz and were the original uncompressed wav format files. Both live recordings and DAW (Digital Audio Workstation) files were used with which the author was intimately familiar. The live music files were mostly of Jazz bands performing in a large hall, with some orchestral recordings from popular halls in both London and various locations in Hertfordshire. The DAW files were made using good quality sampled instruments in order to recreate the sound of an orchestra.

The first step was to set the loudspeakers up properly. This has two principal factors, setting them up in space and adjusting the sound being produced. This is possible as the LP42M has bass and treble controls on the main loudspeaker. The slave, or second loudspeaker is connected via good quality loudspeaker binding posts and Lonpoo even supply a connecting lead which has the ends tinned ready for easy connection.

It is this sort of attention to detail which separates Lonpoo from lesser suppliers. The amplifier component is the reliable 50+50 watts class D device from Texas Instruments which is well suited as it supplies adequate dynamic range and drives the 4" bass driver and 1" high frequency driver very well. The low frequency driver has an aluminium cone and the high frequency unit is a silk dome. This is a good choice as the main bass driver sounds very clean and natural while the silk dome high frequency driver sounds sweet and detailed as expected. Setting the loudspeakers up in space is straightforward enough. Using the supplied lead allows for a good separation and the units may be toed in as required to supply the best stereo image. Note that the loudspeaker binding posts will accept banana plugs or much thicker connecting leads of the users choice if required. Setting up the speakers sonically was undertaken by playing a known live recording via the Acoustica audio editing application at a typical volume level and adjusting the bass and treble controls in order to recreate the closest approach to the original sound. Actually, very little adjustment was required in my particular set-up.

Having set up the loudspeakers as described I ventured to listen to a variety of live recordings which I had recorded and mastered myself and with which I was very familiar. The first surprise came with the depth of sound that these attractive little monitors produced. The quoted frequency response is between 40Hz and 20kHz and I have no reason to doubt these figures. Acoustic Jazz basses were reproduced with appropriate weight, as were the lower registers of the piano (a Yamaha C5) while Jazz guitars and saxophones had a bite to them which created a realistic overall sound. Surprisingly perhaps considering their size, the LP42M loudspeakers could blow up quite a storm when required, which reproduced both the performance

and the characteristics of the venue very well. On orchestral recordings, instruments such as the woodwinds came across clearly and crescendos handled well at the opposite end of the dynamic range. The strings were well produced and detailed. With digital recordings made via a DAW, individual sampled instruments were reproduced cleanly at sample rates of 48 kHz. Importantly, the difference in dynamics and tone was captured, with the subtlety of wood winds against timpani crescendos. I would not hesitate to recommend the LP42M for this type of application as they may be listened to for long periods without fatigue. This is where the choice of the aluminium coned bass unit and the silk dome high frequency unit prove their worth. From a tonality perspective, I compared these speakers with the sound of my trusty AKG 701 studio monitor headphones, which are known to produce a very neutral sound. The LP42M sounded a little warmer with great depth and almost matched the AKG headphones in the high frequency area although, perhaps this was an unfair comparison as the AKG headphones cost more than these loudspeakers and were also produced solely with studio monitoring in mind.

When not being used for creative purposes, one may connect almost any device to the LP42M and simply listen to music, whether it be from uncompressed or compressed files, connected by either direct line or wireless Bluetooth. The speakers are compatible with most Bluetooth variations. When used like this, the sound produced is perfect for an average sized room and these loudspeakers may therefore form the heart of a compact hi-fi system. Turntables with a line level output may be connected for vinyl fans, or perhaps a small pre-amplifier with multiple inputs. When in this mode, the sound produced is deep and detailed without any harshness at normal listening levels. Indeed the depth of sound belies the size of these beautiful looking little

loudspeakers. As one who remembers the progression of hi-fidelity from the late 1960s to the present time, listening to all manner of horn loaded, transmission line, reflex and infinite baffle designs, powered by some of the very best amplifiers of the day, the author has heard all manner of systems. As an audio engineer, he has also recorded instruments such as solo violin, accordion, solo cello, full orchestras, concert bands and almost every variation of Jazz band, plus individual folk and traditional artists, in sample rates up to 96 kHz, carefully mixing and mastering the final result. I have heard loudspeakers which cost 4 or 5 times the cost of the LP42M and yet do not deliver such a musical result. Some rivals are far too clinical and tiring to listen to, some simply do not have the depth of sound and some do not have such a wide dynamic range. Indeed, many of the rival loudspeakers of this type are under-powered regardless of claims made as to their output. Many also are much too harsh and clinical which renders an unrealistic sound. With regard to small studio monitors it is essential that the sound is, above all, realistic. If the sound is bass heavy, for example, your final mixes will be bass light and vice versa. The LP42M allows for adjustment within its spatial setting enabling the user to establish the most neutral sound. Consequently, while some rivals do not have this facility, the LP42M shines when being used as a monitor within a small project studio. However, it also shines when simply being used as the basis for a compact hi-fi system. The better quality input that you can connect, the better the quality of the output

sound. The choice of driver material was an inspired one for this loudspeaker.

The author is also familiar with the Lonpoo LP42 loudspeaker which is an entirely different design, being much smaller, but still featuring interesting drivers, although this is a passive design. Good as the LP42 is within its price range, the LP42M is entirely different, the larger cabinet no doubt helping to produce that warmer, much larger sound. The build quality is higher than might be expected for the price with the traditional vinyl wrap finish being expertly applied to the wooden cabinets. It is also known that the Texas Instruments chip used as quoted with 50+50 watts, often exceeds this value in practice and the LP42M can certainly punch out the music if required to do so. All in all, this is an extremely versatile, great sounding active loudspeaker system which may be employed in a variety of contexts. At this price point it represents almost unheard of value for money considering its versatility. There is even a remote control supplied which may switch the loudspeaker on and off, adjust the volume and select the input or mode. It even features transport controls which may be compatible with your device. Above all, when set up properly, this is simply a great sounding small speaker with a big heart.

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