

AUDIOENZ

New Zealand's hi-fi magazine

ProAc Response D15

Luxury in a compact package

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March 2004

ProAc Response D15 loudspeaker. \$5995

For 25 years, Stewart Tyler, **ProAc** chairman and chief designer, has been responsible for these oft praised British brand of loudspeakers. From the much loved, Tablette mini-monitor through to the Response 4 and 5 behemoths, ProAc's products have met with critical acclaim and sales success. These are luxury products characterised by fine build quality, performance and cost.

Launched in the UK in 2002, the D15 succeeds the old Response 1.5 and is the entry level model for the new D (for Dynamic) flagship range. 2003 saw the release of big brothers, the D25, D38, D80 and D100.

I've had plenty of experience with the large Response 3.8's and was interested in seeing how much of the Response gene pool filtered through to these new entry level speakers.

Build quality and tech stuff

In typical ProAc fashion, the D15 is a beautifully made floorstander of modest proportions; a whisker below the 1m mark at 984mm high with a small 190mm x 254mm footprint. The solid 23kg cabinet is covered in real wood veneers. The review speakers were finished in a light Cherry, with other exquisite woods like Mahogany, Ebony and Bird's Eye Maple also available.



A two-way speaker, the D15 uses a custom made 19mm (3/4") soft dome tweeter to cover the high frequencies. Midrange and bass is handled by a new 165mm (6.5") bass/mid driver with a new linear motor assembly with large copper magnet, phase plug and a glass fibre woven cone. The previous Response range used carbon fibre doped



paper cones and other models in the D-series use coated polypropylene drivers. The back of the cabinet is finished in black with a substantial bi-wire ready binding posts.

The speaker sits atop a screw-on wooden plinth fitted with sharp cone feet and a cut-out for the downward firing bass port, another first in a Response series ProAc speaker. The removal of the bass port from the back to the bottom of the cabinet should allow for extra flexibility in placement.

The D15 has a nominal 8 ohm impedance, is suited to 20-180 watt amplifiers, has a frequency response of 30Hz to 30kHz (no limits specified ...tsk ...tsk) and has a sensitivity of 88dB for 1 watt at 1 metre.

Performance

The ProAc D15's were auditioned with Well Tempered, Shelter, Marantz, Denon sources; amplification by Krell, Plinius.

A quick perusal of the installation guide advises new owners to resist the temptation to connect and play the speakers immediately. Like a fine wine, the speakers should be allowed to stand in the listening room for a few hours at about 15° C ...

I didn't read this until *after* I had everything setup and was greeted with pretty disappointing sound quality. As always, read the manual first!

So does the smallest Response carry on the family tradition of great sound? Yes, with a few qualifications.

Hmm... I feel continuing the above wine analogy is appropriate (feel free to skip this section if you hate wine or car analogies in audio writings). If the big Response series was like a fine Cabernet Sauvignon, this new D15 is like a new world Cabernet Sauvignon/ Merlot blend.

Once acclimatised to room temperature the D15 impressed with a smooth, coherent sound. There was surprising bass weight and extension from the small bass driver (albeit nowhere near the 30Hz claimed by ProAc), proof that ProAc's new bottom exiting reflex port works, only lacking in some bass articulation. Midrange was smooth with no sign of any peaks or troughs. Highs were clean and clear with good extension.

The soundstage produced by this speaker was quite remarkable given the compact size of the speaker, having good width and depth presentation and particularly fine focus of performers and instruments. Overall, the D15 is a natural sounding speaker.

But like so many blends a few compromises are evident.

The sound, while generally of a high standard, couldn't quite escape the confines of the speaker boxes, occasionally sounding boxy. Dynamic impact was a little soft, lending the speaker a polite disposition. Finally, the speakers couldn't quite manage the sense of scale a larger speaker is capable of.

The bottom line

Although they came to be a speaker I admired rather than desired, I enjoyed listening to these speakers.

They are expensive but are also extremely well made, look marvellous and for the most part sound pretty good. For anyone in the market for a luxury pair of compact floorstanders, these are worth an audition.

For your nearest [ProAc dealer](#)
