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>> IN-WALL SPEAKERS COMPARED

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How Dare They?

It's not white! It sticks out! MartinLogan breaks all the rules for in-wall speakers with the Voyage.

I know of no official rule book for in-wall speakers, but if there was one, the first page would read, "They have to be white." Page two would state, "They have to fit perfectly flush with the wall." Page three would stress, "They must be paintable to match the decor." Such restrictions seem obvious because the whole idea of in-wall speakers is that they not be noticed.

Or is it? Not according to MartinLogan founder Gayle Saunders, who states, "Consumers accept lights that extend from the wall, so we thought, 'Let's complement other design items that are already on the wall.' Our speakers function as an element of a room's interior design."

The grille of MartinLogan's largest in-wall, the \$3,990/pair Voyage, arches gracefully out into your room, extending 1.5 inches away from the wall. This may seem a trifling distance, but it is about 10 times as far as a typical in-wall speaker grille sticks out. The arching grille serves acoustic functionality as well as aesthetic principle—it makes room for a gimbaled tweeter that can be pointed directly at the listener and turned 90 degrees in installations where the speaker is mounted horizontally instead of vertically.

MartinLogan offers the Voyage with optional black or



white end caps and grille covers, but originally executed the speaker in a silver color chosen by a professional color consultant to blend with most interiors. To my surprise, I find myself in sympathy with the company's philosophy; the silver speakers look fantastic mounted in my listening room. I imagine they would nicely complement most plasma TVs. However, because their grilles are covered with fabric, they cannot be painted.

Audiophiles love MartinLogan for its towering panel speakers, which use thin, light,

transparent diaphragms to produce a delicate and detailed sound. Such large panels would not be practical as an in-wall speaker, so MartinLogan uses a similar but smaller technology: a thin film ribbon diaphragm. The Voyage has a single ribbon tweeter and two ribbon midranges, along with two conventional 8-inch woofers. The drivers mount in a faceplate made from a heavy piece of fiberboard sandwiched between layers of aluminum. Two aluminum I-beams mounted on the speakers further stiffen the assembly. The Voyage is so massive and stiff that it holds the wall in place, largely preventing troublesome vibrations. It measures 35.9 inches high by 10.5 inches wide.

Gonzalez ranked the Voyage his favorite. "The sound is clean top to bottom," he enthused. "It has the best stereo imaging and the deepest soundstage. And it has great, deeply extended bass, although it's a little bit bright-sounding to me." Wood said many of the same things about the Voyage but noted that the deeper notes of male vocals and dialogue sometimes sounded overemphasized—a point that Gonzalez had to concede.

My point of view is already on record: I am so impressed with these speakers that I have already written about them in three other magazines. The sound of the ribbon drivers practically jumps right out of

RATING: EXCELLENT

DESCRIPTION: MartinLogan Voyage In-Wall Speakers

HIGH POINTS: Unique, stylish, attention-getting look; vivid, audiophile-pleasing sound

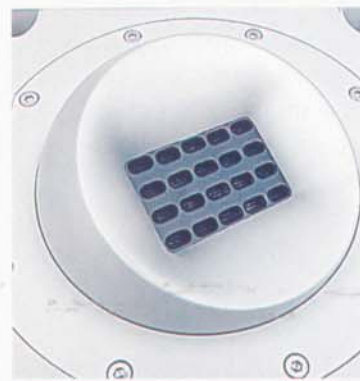
LOW POINTS: You may not like the unique, stylish, attention-getting look; can't paint the grille

CONTACT: MartinLogan, 785.749.0133
www.martinlogan.com

PRICE: \$3,990/pair

the wall; instruments sometimes seem to come not only from the sides of the room but even from behind the listener. I can think of only two or three other in-walls that achieve this spacious, enveloping sound. I do, however, agree with Gonzalez and Wood that the treble could be tamed by a decibel or two.

MartinLogan backs up Voyage's bold industrial design with outstanding audio performance. This is an in-wall speaker even an audiophile could own with pride.



The Voyage's crossover integrates large air-core coil inductors, with low gauge, high-purity copper wiring. Die-cast aluminum mounting locks guarantee fast, trouble-free installation while preserving acoustic purity.