



# EPSILON RIBBONS

*Few speakers retain  
sonic integrity at  
realistic levels, but the  
Epsilon can*

by CHRIS BEECHING

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**R**ibbons aren't dead, nor, does it seem, are planar drive units. Combining the two would seem to be a good idea, and Analysis has done just that with its range of three planar-ribbon speakers. Called (in ascending order of size) the Omikron, Epsilon and Omega, the initial impression is of an Apogee copy. However, their performance and fundamental differences set them well apart.

The Epsilon stands some 4ft tall, 2ft wide and 2in thick, with the small, triangular stands rearward projecting 10in providing vertical support. The speakers lean backwards at about 10° and are 'handed'. Down one side the treble ribbon stretches from top-to-bottom, and

the rest of the frontal area is taken up with the mid-bass planar driver.

Connectors at the rear are of quite astoundingly high quality; gold-plated finished with soft rubber rings around for easy grip when tightening onto bare wires, the sockets will accept a wide range of spades, bare wires, 4mm banana plugs, and with separate terminals for bare and planar drivers, bi-wiring is easily accomplished. However, connecting links are also provided for on bi-wire (or is it 'standard'?) operation.

Initially, the speakers have an imposing presence. Once set in motion though, the speakers tended to disappear, both visually and aurally. We found, after a little experimentation, that position, once the back wall was a metre or so away, made little difference to the overall performance.

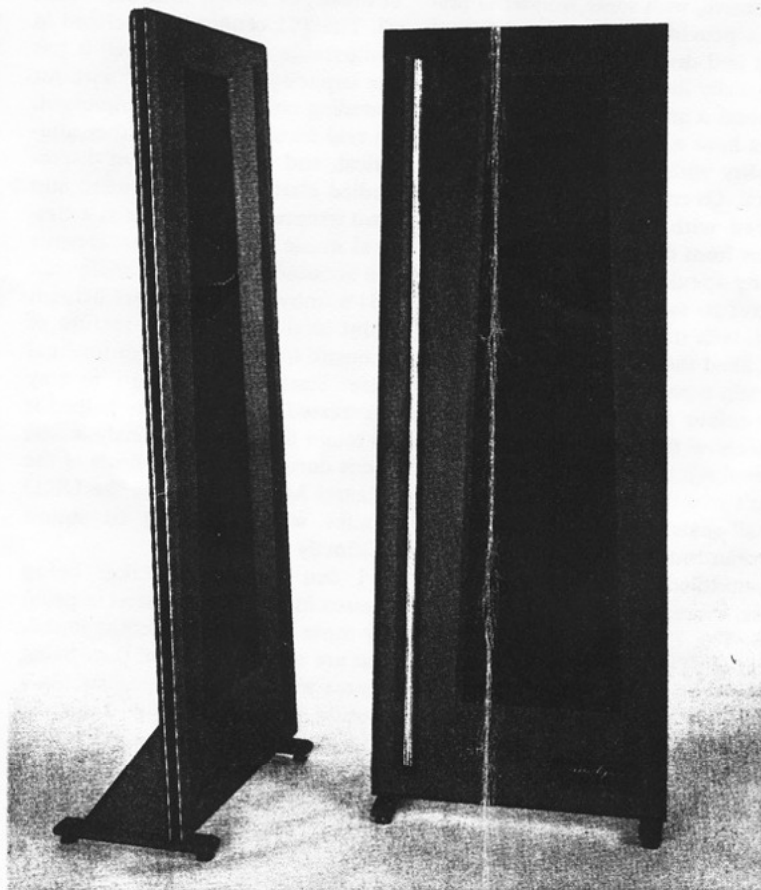
In order to obtain a wide stereo image, we placed the speakers with the ribbon tweeter running down the outside edge of the speakers, rather than concentrating treble energy in the centre. With the treble ribbons in the centre, imagery went to pot, providing a wonderful depth, but little side-to-side detail.

Sensitivity seems to lie around the 87/88dB/W level, with both valve and solid-state amps driving them with relative ease. Frequency response was quoted as 26-20kHz, and from listening, it seems a very flat and even speaker. Room modes do get excited - it's as adept as an electrostatic dipole from that point of view, hence the need to stay a fair distance away from the rear walls.

First disc on the turntable was the 1976 recording on Argo of *Pulcinella* (ZRG 575). The performance is magical and the sparkle and enjoyment from the players was easily discernible. The double bass had depth, space and full rounded and deep tone. The piccolo and bassoon were clear even when the texture became complicated and busy. The Epsilon never gave the impression that things were getting too much. But the speakers also had a tremendous sense of punch on sudden climaxes and transients. In particular, on plucked strings and *tutti fortissimos* were handled with ease. With such an open and revealing recording, any speaker coloration would be in evidence right from the outset. Not this time. The speaker sounded fast, articulate, deep and detailed.

Moving on to more complex textures, Saint-Saens's 3rd Symphony hit the CD player - one of the most difficult works to record (and perform) due to the huge forces involved, combining organ and full orchestra. Again the speaker excelled. It was easy to differentiate when the organ was underpinning the orchestral texture with deep sustained pedal. The result was not the muddle usually associated with lesser speaker systems, but a genuine ease in hearing both the organ and the double basses playing their own different parts. When the brass entered over the full organ/orchestra, the effect was one of 'how did I get that lot in my living room?'. Despite the dynamics and full texture, the size and space of the acoustic wasn't lost either. If I have been praising the 'loud' capability of the speakers, then it is not at the expense of subtlety and low-level detail. Fast brass tonguing and the bassoons' reeds starting to speak are as easily heard as the rasp of the trumpets.

Moving on to perhaps the sternest test - vocals - I pressed Rifkin's version of 'Jauchzet Gott in allen Landen' into service (Oiseau Lyre 417 616-2). The trumpet and soprano



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