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January 2015 ₹100

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THE LATEST KIT TO HIT INDIA

Why you should read?

Off-the-shelf is a collection of the hottest and newest products in Indian stores this month and selected from a variety of locations so regardless of where you live in India, you will never be far away from a dealer who can fix you up with one of these systems. If it's out there, it's in here!

Expert opinion

What Hi Fi? (India) has some of the finest ears in the country, enabling a product review of superior credibility and authenticity. Our expert reviewers have more than 20 years of collective experience and this helps them make accurate judgments of every kind of hi-fi equipment thrown at them.

Price sensitivity

Like all product reviews in WHF, Off-the-shelf will also rely on the price to performance ratio to derive its verdict. While we are audiophiles at heart, we also sometimes listen to our minds. Not just to keep matters interesting but also for mere survival! If a product sounds like God but costs as much as His blessings, we'd rather put our money on the underdog and have enough savings for a decent set of interconnects!

Official and Certified

You can rest assured since all equipment tested in Off-the-shelf has been sourced from only the authorized agents in India, dispelling any doubts concerning quality of the sales, service or installation. If you read about it in Off-the-shelf, you can buy it with confidence.

Listening Room

The *What Hi Fi?* Team has been hard at work reviewing kit fresh from the AV oven and putting it through the paces in our dedicated listening rooms. With a state-of-the-art space to accommodate even bigger equipment and better acoustics, you can rely on our reviews for the most accurate impression of a new product. Helping us achieve this level of AV perfection are brands like: APPLE MAC MINI • PROJECTION DESIGN • NAD • MONSTER CABLE • DENON • TOTEM • SPYDER TV • DA-LITE • SOUL NOTE

Audio Physic Scorpio 25 plus

₹6,97,000

With a name that bears the pillar of science, along with a rather sanguine tag line, Audio Physic has a lot to live up to. Thankfully, with its origins in Germany and a guiding philosophy that is deeply embedded in research and cutting-edge manufacturing technique, they seem to be well insured against naysayers. The Scorpio 25 Plus is an updated model that was originally introduced into the line-up way back in 1996 and is a shining example of real engineering never going out of fashion. Of course, everything from the drivers to the crossovers has evolved since then but the concept and promise remains the same. Our review samples were gorgeously finished in ebony and even without the love of music, these could be worth having in the living room just as fine pieces of furniture!

Standing a tall 43in, the Scorpio's don't look so imposing thanks to the narrow front baffle. It's a shape that has been honed to reduce vibrations and internal standing waves. Produced by Hornslet in Denmark using the patented Hornflex technology, it is a complex construction that is as rigid as any high-end floorstander we have knuckle-tested. The teardrop profile also lends it a much larger internal volume than the front view might suggest. After all, with four 7in drivers on board in a push-push configuration, the Scorpio can generate prodigious low-end energy. Audio Physic calls this a 3.5-way design since of the two midrange drivers, one shares duty into the midbass region. Essentially they share the same cutoff point (150Hz) but one goes up to 500Hz while the other, all the way to 2.8kHz. Unlike a lot of other competing brands, Audio Physic also likes to design its own drivers and they call these the Hyper-Holographic Cone units. Manufactured in China by Wavecor, they are amongst the highest quality and tightest tolerance drivers in the industry. What sets both the mids and the tweeters apart is the design principle. Unusually, the tweeter is a cone design and what looks like a dome is a mere dustcap. Said to provide a more controlled dispersion at the crossover frequency and also a more linear in-room response. The midrange is an aluminium cone with a hybrid plastic/aluminum basket which makes it lighter, more rigid and is thermally beneficial too. The Active Cone Damping is in its second generation too and uses a U-shaped elastic ring around the rim of the cone to hold it closer and

tighter to the assembly while eliminating the ringing effects that may originate from the contact points. Audio Physic may sound obsessive about these details but the result pays off the moment you sit down for a listen.

Placed 7ft apart and with more than a foot of breathing space around them, the Scorpio's settled in for the long haul. Our listening position was about 10ft from the speakers and after some experimentation, we decided to fire the speakers straight into the room rather than toeing them in. The HHCT tweeter unit has a wide dispersion, so getting a strong centre image was never an issue and the soundstage really stood out beyond the speaker boundaries. What hits you the most starkly at first is the quality of the bass. With a total of 8 woofers doing their thing, that shouldn't be a surprise but it's the speed and definition that will keep you hunting for punishing tracks long after

With seven drivers per speaker, integration often becomes an issue but the Scorpio managed to sound coherent and focused

the lights are dimmed. London Grammar's *Hey Now* makes many a good speaker crumble to their knees but, on the Scorpio, the sustained electronic low-end note was reproduced as a clean, uncompressed wave of energy that filled up the room without ever hanging around like a guest who's overstayed his welcome. The control over the woofers is staggering and almost overshadows how detailed and revealing the upper section of this loudspeaker is. The twin midrange drivers share the excursion load, making for an utterly uncompressed nature of vocals, no matter how hard you drive them. Hugh Masekela's *Stimela* is a reference when it comes to dynamic range, soundstage depth, timbral accuracy and compression and the Scorpio 25 Plus excelled in all these parameters. In fact, there was so much headroom in the speakers that our preamp was maxed out and yet the speakers took it all in without a hint of strain as the JBL Synthesis amplifier cranked out the goods. Hugh's howls and gut-wrenching intro is the stuff goosebumps are made of and the Scorpio emotes so well, it practically transports you to the venue. With seven drivers per speaker, integration often becomes an issue but the Scorpio managed to sound coherent and focused. The only real chink in its armour is a slight thickening of the midbass which can be controlled

through careful positioning and some room acoustics. It's also worth mentioning that the Audio Physic website is one of the best in terms of breaking down complex acoustical phenomena and suggesting changes in your room that are a quick fix. Being predominantly German in their outlook, the english translation could be better, but it provides more than enough understanding to ensure you get decent returns from your sound investment. High-quality amplification is obviously a must and so is a good source since they can be highly revealing. Willie Nelson's *He is a Friend of Mine* from the Brokeback Mountain OST is a great test for vocal accuracy and microdetail and the Scorpio kept his voice true to the pitch and placed just the right amount of emphasis on the layered harmonics of the lush recording. They never fail to disappear from the room and for a pair of large floorstanders, that is no mean feat. Tonally, there is a great balance here that smoothens even imperfect recordings but not at the expense of excitement or verve. The tweeter is brimming with detail and microdynamics but again, without causing fatigue even after long hours of continuous listening.

It may not be the first name that crosses your mind when you're shortlisting a sub-₹10lac pair of floorstanders but it should. In terms of 'excursion area', the Scorpio 25 Plus offers more speaker than most but they really are more about finesse than outright slam. Their bass performance, is in a league of its own and perhaps the tightest and most accurate we've heard in a long time. There could be a tad bit more warmth in the overall sonic presentation but what it lacks, it more than makes up in spatial imaging, huge soundstage and a dynamic performance across the frequency spectrum. Their fine woodworking also makes them tuned to different kinds of decor, making it a complete package for the music lover or the hi-fi collector.

Rating

FOR Coherent, accurate tonal balance, bass performance up there with the best

AGAINST Slight forwardness to the mids, nothing of note at this price

VERDICT Classy floorstander that ticks all the right boxes and sounds fabulous. Must buy!

TECH SPECS

Design 3.5way, 7 driver **Drivers** 4 x 7in woofers, 2 x 5.9in midrange, 1 x 1.75in tweeter **Impedance** 4ohms **Sensitivity** 91dB **Frequency range** 29Hz - 40kHz **Dimensions (HWD)** 43.3 x 8.5 x 15.4in **Weight** 27kgs



NEED TO KNOW

CONSIDER IF

Your music library is varied and you need a speaker for all seasons

YOU'LL NEED

A power amplifier capable of at least 200WPC to bring out the best in them

MAKE SURE

There's a distance of 6ft or more from the sweet spot for them to sound their best

AVOID

Toeing them in too much as you'll rob them of air and soundstage width

HIGHLIGHT?

Dynamic and accurate bass that will change the way you think about LF

