

## SPEAKER SAMPLING...

This month, it's speakers. Our longtime audio guru Mike Klasco cranks the Community S-Series speakers.

### Community S-Series Speakers

A few months ago, we received two pair of full-range speakers and a pair of subwoofers from Community's S-Series line. The series consists of four portable full-range models and two subwoofers.

Two of the full-range speakers are two-way (woofer/horn) models (the 12-inch 1296 unit and the 15-inch 1596 unit), but we tested the three-way 12-inch 3294 unit (\$699 list) and the three-way 15-inch 3594 unit (\$799 list), both of which include a horn-loaded midrange speaker. With a 2-way design, compression drivers can struggle in the lower midrange—where the vocals are. So, with the 3-way design, this was really where the Community speakers excelled—clean vocals at intense levels.

A 12-inch or 15-inch woofer? If you don't have a sub, or if many of your jobs don't warrant dragging along a real sub, then the 15-inch 3594 would be a good choice. But if you have a regular job where the gear stays put, or if you mostly take the sub along with you, then the 3294 is the way to go with its 12-inch. It is not a matter of money or dragging the biggest boxes along—put a bigger exhaust pipe on your car if you need to show off—but for sound quality. It is better for a 12-inch to rise up to the midrange horn than a 15-inch woofer. This will show up as smoother sound off-axis in the woofer's upper range. Anyway, I thought the 3294 also sounded a bit tighter than the 15-inch. The 3294 has 100-dB sensitivity, which is excellent, and can handle more than 500 watts with peak levels reaching 900 watts.

**Construction:** We did a tear-down on the 1296 (\$599 list), which has protective steel grilles, tough heavy paint coating, good grade Birch plywood with internal bracing, seat track rigging, Ergo-Grip handles and a fiberglass (not plastic) mid- and high-frequency horns.

**The Guts:** Decent drivers—the woofer had a cast aluminum frame (rather than the usual stamped steel) and the magnetic structure was hefty. The woofer cone had some tricks to prevent breakup, so the sound is cleaner, and perhaps that is why the 1296 held together exceptionally well at high levels. The crossover was well-constructed with high power components and could be bypassed for bi-amping by external switches.

Also the crossover boasted Community's DYNATECH™ protection circuits and music/speech presence switch to accommodate the acoustical conditions of the venue. The twist-lock Neutrik connectors won't let the connector be pulled out if some drunk trips over them, but expect to spend some bucks on the cables with Speak-on Neutrik connectors. We used the Monster Studio Pro 1000

speaker/amplifier cables, which were nicely made and robust.

**Field Test:** DJ Times taste tester Dimitris Mykonos took the 1296 out to some jobs over a six-month period. The San Francisco-based DJ mentioned that one person can hand-carry the 48-pound unit—although his face was a bit red at the time. He was most impressed that the 1296 plays louder and cleaner than both the powered 2-way speakers he uses for both monitoring and dance-floor sound. Vocals were effortless and well-defined, even at intense sound levels. Bass was balanced and, when used with a subwoofer and electronic crossover, even higher levels could be reached without distortion. Also, you may want to consider a few accessories, like the optional speaker support stand (SB5) and padded transport covers (CVR-S32).

**Bottom Line:** The S-Series has excellent speakers, sounding clean at high levels. Their high sensitivity will get the most from your amplifier and they represent a good investment.

