

SECRETS of Home Theater and High Fidelity



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TECHNOLOGY

Product Review

Atlantic Technology System 2200 7.1 Home Theater Speakers January, 2006 • Mark Smith



Specifications:

2200 LR Front:

- Type: Sealed-box. 2-way D'Appolito Array
- Tweeter: (1) 1" Soft Dome Woofer: (2) 4 1/2" GLH
- Magnetic Shielding: Yes
- Frequency Response: 90 Hz - 20 kHz $\pm$ 3 dB
- Recommended Amplifier Power: 10 - 140 Watts RMS
- Sensitivity: 90 dB
- Crossover Point: 3.5 kHz, 3rd Order
- Impedance: 8 Ohms Compatible
- Dimensions: 12.9" H x 6.4" W x 7" D
- Weight (ea): 7.5 Pounds

2200 C Center:

- Type: Sealed Enclosure. 2-way D'Appolito Array
- Tweeter: (1) 1" Soft Dome Woofer: Two 4-1/2" GLH
- Magnetic Shielding: Yes
- Frequency Response: 90 Hz - 20 kHz $\pm$ 3 dB
- Recommended Amplifier Power: 10 - 140 Watts RMS
- Sensitivity: 90 dB
- Crossover Point: 3.5 kHz, 3rd Order
- Impedance: 8 Ohms Compatible
- Dimensions: 7.5" H x 14.6" W x 7" D
- Weight (ea): 8 Pounds w/base

2200 SR Surround:

- Type: Sealed Enclosure; Dipole/Bipole Surround Speaker
- Tweeter: (2) 1" Soft Dome Woofer: Two 4-1/2" GLH
- Magnetic Shielding: No
- Frequency Response: 90 Hz - 20 kHz $\pm$ 3 dB
- Recommended Amplifier Power: 10 - 140 Watts RMS
- Sensitivity: 90 dB
- Crossover Point: 3.5 kHz, 2nd Order
- Impedance: 8 Ohms Compatible
- Dimensions: 10.4" H x 11.4" W x 7.5" D
- Weight (ea): 7.5 Pounds

422 SB Subwoofer:

- Type/Features: Powered Subwoofer, Sealed Enclosure, 2", Four Layer Vented Aluminum Voice Coil, Vented Motor. Continuous 40-140 Hz Crossover, 18 dB/Octave Low-pass Outputs, Absolute Phase Invert Switch. Auto Signal Sensing
- Woofer: 12" Long-throw Composite Cone
- Output Power: 225W RMS
- THD (Amplifier): <0.5%
- MFR: 25 Hz - 250 Hz $\pm$ 3 dB
- Low Level (line): 20 kOhm
- Peak Output: 103 dB SPL into 2000 ft3
- Dimensions: 17.75" H x 17.25" W x 16.9" D
- Weight: 44 Pounds

System Price: \$2,200 - \$2,600 (5.1 vs. 7.1)

Introduction

Atlantic Technology produces home theater speaker systems that range in price from \$900 - \$25,000. According to Atlantic Technology, "The goal of home theater isn't to put you in the movie theater; it's to put you in the movie!"

Well, they came very close with their System 2200. This package delivers an impressive experience, while ranging in price from \$2,000-\$2,600 depending on configuration.

The Design

I had the pleasure of reviewing the 7.1 System 2200 utilizing various genres of music as well as movies. Most of the testing was performed with the 5.1 setup due to room limitations. However, some testing was done with 7.1 which I will discuss later in the article. All of the speakers arrived in perfect condition even though it appeared the UPS had been a little hard on the boxes. They were packaged soundly with double plastic wrapping around the speakers along with foam inserts.

The speakers have excellent craftsmanship. There are black high-gloss side panels on all of the speakers except for the 2200 SR surrounds. Due to the enclosure design (one woofer and tweeter angled to the right and one set angled to the left), there are no side panels for the high-gloss back inserts.

The front speakers have two 4 1/2" graphite loaded polymer woofers and a 1" ferrofluid-cooled, damped soft dome tweeter, while the surround speakers each have two of the same woof-

ers and two of the same tweeters.

The subwoofer grille has a plastic frame, covered by gray cloth. The volume control is at the upper right behind the grille. The location of the level control was not very accessible for testing, so the grille was absent most of the time.

The rest of the speakers have metal grilles that attach magnetically to the enclosures, and this seems to work well. It was very easy to align them, and they looked great installed. They have a semi-transparent quality which allows one to see the drivers, and what audiophile doesn't like to see the hardware in action?

The front channel speakers (2200 LR) and the surround speakers all have keyhole brackets as well as 1/4" x 20 threaded posts to handle most applications. I utilized the keyhole brackets for the surrounds but did find that the keyhole size was smaller than my personal surrounds, so I had to use a Dremel® tool to grind down the screw heads a little for them to fit.

Added Features



There are a several features that are standard on the System 2200 that are rare in this price range. The center channel (2200 C) has two features that help optimize it according to the room acoustics. First, it has a "High Frequency

Energy" control which changes the "tilt or roll-off slope" of the tweeter.

This control has 3 settings:

1. "Reverberant" (decreases the high frequency output of the speaker) for rooms with an abundance of reflective surfaces like hardwood floors and glass walls.
2. "Damped Room" (increases slightly the tweeter's output) which can compensate for overly absorbent rooms with lots of soft surfaces.
3. "Average" which worked well for my room which has a combination of large glass windows as well as large couches and carpeting.

Second, it has "Boundary Compensation" or "Normal" toggle switch which is able to "adjust the lower frequency output of the speaker to compensate for the typical sound colorations caused by placing the speaker too close to a TV screen or building it into a wall cabinet". I found the best position for my setting (center channel on a bracket slightly above a 62" DLP) was "Normal".

The surround speakers have both a "Dipole" setting as well as a "Bi-pole" setting. Atlantic Technology has always focused on multi-channel systems, and they felt that having an option of Dipole was necessary to produce "minimal localization".

I found that the dipole setting worked very well at allowing the soundstage to blend seamlessly. My Wife was also impressed with the seamless sound production. The Bipole setting changed the soundstage by focusing it more distinctly at each surround speaker as opposed to blending it.



It would be nice if the selectable controls were easier to access. Once the speakers are on the wall, it can be difficult to reach the Dipole/Bipole switch, and if the center channel is built into the wall, it can be hard to access its controls too, since all of them are next to the speaker terminals. This challenge is obviously not limited to these speakers alone.

Performance

Let me start by quoting Atlantic Technology in regards to this series: "The attractive system sets a new standard for the company for high performance at modest cost."

I would like to expand on this and say that not only would I agree with their statement in regards to their own company, but any company in existence producing compact home theater speakers. There will always be some limitations when producing "compact" speakers that are designed near perfection, yet limited in size. As a result, you simply cannot fit large drivers within the enclosure and completely cover the dynamic range as effectively as full-range large speakers.

I started my testing with the Eagles: Hell Freezes Over

DTS DVD. The first thing I noticed was that this system has the ability to do two things very well. First, when the artist wants you to hear different instruments, the system can demonstrate them very accurately. Second, when the artist wants a seamless sound stage and have you enveloped in the music, it can do that too.

The entire system, including the sub, blended very well. As the music increased in volume, it was very refreshing to hear all of the speakers including the sub move in unison. The opening song was a joy to listen to from the guitars, to the bongos, to Don Henley's vocals. The only limitation I observed was a slight lacking in the lower midrange which seemed to limit the feeling that you are on stage with the band. This could be due to room anomalies.

I also observed that the speakers did very well at a volume level appropriate for background music while having a conversation with someone. There did seem to be somewhat of a reduced clarity or flat spot in Don Henley's voice at about 3/4 of the speaker's capacity. However, the clarity returned once I increased the volume. They then proceeded to sound great with no audible distortion at high SPLs nearing their maximum rating. A lot of listeners like to crank their systems, and if you are one of those people, give this package an audition.

I then watched the IMAX Super Speedway DVD. I enjoy Chapter 14 where it talks about some of the "Fastest Road Courses in America". The subwoofer kept up very well with the racing portions especially when the car would travel under the overpasses (see also our review of the Atlantic Technology 642e SB subwoofer, which is a larger brother of the 422 SB sub reviewed here). The blending between the front speakers and surround speakers was extremely accurate. I definitely felt as though I was at the track watching the race. Full sized speakers might perform a little better at this task, but for bookshelf speakers, the 2200s do a fine job.

One of the highlights of my testing experience was with the Diana Krall: Live at the Montreal Jazz Festival 2004 DVD. The system sounded great reproducing both the instruments as well as her voice. One aspect caught me by surprise, while listening to track 5 "Abandoned Masquerade". When I am reviewing speakers, I tend to analyze every note, every instrument, and get as technical as possible. On this particular song, once Ms. Krall's voice began, within 15 seconds, I was no longer analyzing the speakers. I became an integral part of the audience, present, and focused on her



every word. This is the ultimate compliment I can give to Atlantic Technology on these speakers. It is truly impressive when you can be drawn into the performance where you no longer are listening to speakers, but to a performance.

I also listened to several music CDs such as Sting: Ten Summoner's Tales and Brand New Day (both DTS audio CDs) and was very impressed at how well the front three speakers blended so that there was absolutely no discernible source of the music. It was just "there" surrounding me with clarity.

I listened to several CDs and DVDs utilizing the 7.1 configuration. However, I do not have an adequate room to place all of the speakers perfectly. As a result, while all of the speakers sounded great, the 5.1 setup worked the best for me.

Conclusions

This is the best compact speaker system I have ever listened to. The tone of the speakers match so well that the only time you are ever really looking at a speaker is when the artist specifically places an instrument in that section of the soundstage intentionally. I would prefer to have a little more mid-bass, but this is definitely better than having too much.

The excellent build quality as well as the actual music and dialogue that emanates from them truly show that Atlantic Technology has accomplished a difficult task, namely a fine balance between budget and quality.

- Mark Smith -

Associated Equipment

Sunfire Theater Grand IV

Sunfire Cinema Grand Signature 400 watts x 7 channels

Oppo OPDV971 DVD Player

Toshiba 62" DLP HDTV

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