

# EPICUREAN PERFORMANCE

We enjoy the emotional response from this midrange pair of British-branded standmounting stereo speakers.

## ↗ Epos Epic 2 stereo loudspeakers

Price: \$1200



Even despite the current global doom and gloom, the consumer electronics industry remains quite upbeat and buoyant. Natural disasters and financial crises can't halt the advance of technology and although it's always exciting to learn of some new format or hardware, old-school hi-fi still has plenty of charm.

Thankfully, not all of us listen to our music through white earbuds. The best way to enjoy this sort of aural stimulation is on a decent two-channel hi-fi system — source, amplifier and, of course, loudspeakers.

### EQUIPMENT

Epos just makes loudspeakers; no iPod docks, Wi-Fi or Bluetooth here. Its new Epic range comprises three models, numbered in King Arthur counting style as the 1, 2 and 5 — two standmounters and a floorstander. The Epic 2s reviewed here are standmounters of medium size, measuring 415 x 210 x 280mm. They're traditional two-way designs using a new soft-

dome tweeter (a first for Epos, as opposed to its usual metal dome) and a 180mm bass/mid driver also newly developed by Epos to produce an "even frequency response and smooth roll-off". It's a relatively amplifier-friendly loudspeaker design, with a nominal four-ohm impedance and a higher-than-average 90dB<sub>SPL</sub> sensitivity, for which Epos recommends amps that deliver between 20 and 120 watts per channel. For the majority of our listening we used the amazing little Topping TP10 mk.4 Tripath amplifier (rated at just 15W per channel, but what it lacks in sheer grunt, it more than makes up for with superb detail and control).

Designed and engineered in Great Britain and assembled in Epos' Chinese manufacturing facility under tight control, the quality here is fantastic. As part of its design philosophy, Epos has kept the crossover network as simple as possible. It has ensured the component quality is up there, using the likes of polypropylene capacitors and metal-oxide resistors. The

binding posts are gold-plated and the Epic 2s can be biwired. Internally, the 18mm MDF cabinet panels have been braced both vertically and horizontally — the old knuckle wrap test sounded reassuringly solid and dead. Build and finish (there's Black Ash or Cherry vinyl veneers) are both excellent.

Out of the box, the Epics come without any grilles attached — acoustically transparent grilles are provided and Epos has come up with a unique method of fitting or removing them. The smooth front baffle has no visible fixing screws but can be popped off with a nifty baffle removal tool that you slide through a small hole just above the rear bass reflex port. A gentle tap and the baffle pops off so you can replace it with the supplied cloth grilles.

A decent pair of speaker stands is a mandatory partner to any standmounters and Epos has its own recommendation — the STi12 stand. We used a pair of sand-filled 51cm column stands which proved the ideal height. Epos also recommends placing the

Epic 2s no less than 10cm from the rear wall. We'd agree — with a rear-firing port the trade off between bass reinforcement and stereo depth means don't put them too close. With a bit of experimentation we ended up with the speakers around 70cm from the rear wall and toed-in toward the listening position.

## PERFORMANCE

The pair we received from Aussie distributor Epöz had only been in the country a few days and never out of the box. So, initial listening was with a cold pair, but that can still be a useful gauge of things to come — first impressions do count. And we liked what we were hearing straight from the first few bars.

A good medium-sized standmounter can deliver the best of both cabinet types. You still have the intimacy and immediacy of a smaller cabinet, but there's genuine, usable bass as well. Admittedly, the Epic 2s don't extend as deeply as a floorstander or larger drivers will allow, but after some running in and proper positioning what you do get is a tight, tuneful and really well-controlled bottom end. These speakers are full of drive and energy — revisiting some solid '80s classic Soul II Soul the dub-bass lines of *Keep on Movin'* pulsed nicely with a balance on the warmer side of

neutral. Boasting plenty of character, the Epic 2s never produced any aggressive-sounding hard edges, no matter what the musical style.

Remaining in the same decade we continued our trip down big-hair memory lane with some period vinyl — pure '80s pop from the likes of The Thompson Twins and Duran Duran which, although isn't our usual listening fare, proved one thing — the Epic 2s handle heavily processed material well. We liked the manner in which the soft-dome tweeter (and crossover) didn't exaggerate already harsh and bright recordings — there's nothing worse than a top-end that shrieks. To the contrary, the Epic 2's are far more refined and even-sounding here, but with excellent clarity.

This also translates to the old female vocal acid test, and with a spot of classic Carpenters, Karen's voice was sharply etched against an equally clear instrumental backdrop. Each note of classic tracks such as *A Song For You* are well defined with a clear beginning and end; it's rare to hear such precision from a loudspeaker at this price.

Getting back to the present day, but sticking with equally melodic tunes, Elbow's latest album *Build a Rocket Boys!* told us just how well these speakers performed as

all-rounders. They have the ability to present music in an emotional rather than technical manner (which, no matter the style, always suits the music better). The infectious opening track *The Birds* had our toes well and truly tapping with a smooth and clean delivery. All the right speaker hi-fi elements were present and correct — great soundstaging, excellent stereo depth, stable imagery, plus that tight and tuneful bass. What more could you ask for from \$1200 speakers? Not a fat lot.

Finally, we hooked them up to some powerful Arcam power amplification, popped in some progressive rock à la Porcupine Tree and gave the volume a nudge. The Epic 2s will certainly play loud enough in any normal-sized living room, though if it's 'ears still ringing the next morning' that does it for you (that's unhealthily loud) then we'd suggest a bigger floorstander. If you like intimacy, with plenty of detail and analysis that never get in the way of the music, these new Epos deliver just that.

## CONCLUSION

Provided you don't plan on listening at head-banging volume levels, the Epic 2s will dish up whatever's sent down the speaker cables. They're an amplifier-friendly enough design, but like any capable loudspeaker, they just get better with decent electronics. If you're after a standmounter around this price level and enjoy a smooth but full musical presentation, then we recommend the Epic 2s should be high on your audition list. *Nic Tatham* +

**"A good medium-sized standmounter can deliver the best of both cabinet types. You still have the intimacy and immediacy of a smaller cabinet, but there's genuine, usable bass as well..."**

## VERDICT

### Epos Epic 2 stereo loudspeakers

Price: \$1200



- Smooth and fluid performers
- Musical all-rounders
- Excellent build and finish



- May not play hard enough for smelly rockers
- Limited finish options

#### QUOTED FREQUENCY RESPONSE:

48Hz-25kHz

SENSITIVITY: 90dB SPL

NOMINAL IMPEDANCE: 4 ohms

CROSSOVER FREQUENCIES: 700Hz, 2.9kHz

STATED AMPLIFIER COMPATIBILITY:

20-120W

POWER HANDLING: 120W (unclipped speech and music)

CABINET: 18mm MDF

FINISHES: Cherry or Black Ash vinyl veneer

DIMENSIONS: 415 x 210 x 280mm

WEIGHT: 8.6kg (each)

CONTACT: Epöz Australia

TEL: 02 9450 0789

WEB: [www.epoz.com.au](http://www.epoz.com.au)