

Creek Cymatics 6: good vibrations

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Creek Cymatics 6 speakers

Creek Audio is famed for its electronics, founder Mike Creek launched his first amplifier the Creek 4040 in 1982. It's a brand which has consistently provided great electronics for a reasonable outlay and that amp was the foundation of many a starter hi-fi system. Mike's association with loudspeakers commenced when he acquired Epos, and ceased when he sold the brand a few years ago, but Creek Audio has not manufactured loudspeakers under its own name for several decades.

Cymatics is the study of visible sound and vibrational patterns produced in mediums like water or metal plates, and it's what inspired Luke Creek in the design and naming this speaker range from Creek Audio. The Cymatics 6 is the middle-sized of a proposed line-up of three. True to its name, the control and reduction of unwanted vibration has been his focus in selecting drive units, and designing the cabinet and crossover. Luke has not voiced it to create a particular sound balance, but to be as neutral as possible.

The drive units chosen are of very high quality, both being manufactured by SB Acoustics, who are known for their excellence. The 171mm SB mid/bass driver has a custom in-house fibre cone, with very well-controlled behaviour below the crossover frequency, meaning that resonances have been well suppressed here, with any remaining pushed to above the crossover frequency. Likewise, the tweeter employs a 25mm (one inch) aluminium-alloy dome with a well-damped main diaphragm resonance of well above 20kHz.

In standard trim, this tweeter is a direct radiating device, but Creek has added their own custom-machined solid aluminium waveguide. It's rigid enough to avoid any self resonance and, more importantly, modifies the dispersion (off-axis output) to be narrower at its lower frequency

range, and hence be more like that of the woofer through the crossover region. Creek claims that the result is stable imaging and a consistent tonal balance across the listening area.

So, was he correct? Well, it can be a problem when the dispersion of the woofer narrows at its highest operating frequency, where a small dome tweeter has a very wide inherent dispersion. Such speakers can measure very well on-axis, but exhibit a sharp change in off-axis output in the crossover range, which means that room reflections do not sound like the direct



sound, creating an audible disparity and lack of realism. The larger the woofer, the smaller the tweeter and the higher the crossover, the greater the discrepancy.

In broad terms this should mean that the off-axis frequency response of the Cymatics 6, with its wave-guide tweeter, has the potential to be more consistent with the on-axis response, which should help provide a more natural and lifelike in-room sound. The waveguide also improves the tweeter's output and power handling, and shifts the tweeter's acoustic centre more in line with the woofer's, which helps achieve time and phase alignment between the drive units.

The Cymatics 6 is a tall, deep, stand mount, measuring 41cm (16") high. The cabinet is 25mm (1") thick MDF and braced comprehensively inside to minimise any unwanted flexure and to push any resonances above the critical mid-band, while all the edges have been given a radius to reduce diffraction. The woofer is acoustically loaded by a reflex port on the rear, which is flared at both ends to minimise turbulent noise and non linearity. Finally, the cloth-covered grilles are held on to the front panel by powerful magnets underneath the high-gloss-paint finish.

Luke favours first order tweeter crossovers, so the tweeter is fed by a good-quality polypropylene film capacitor and resistor, while the woofer section is third-order in topology. (The review speakers were a pre-production pair, containing Mundorf capacitors of similar type and quality to the Bencic FPP metallised polyester capacitors to be used for production).

What about the sound

When I first heard a pair of the Cymatics 6 at the Bristol Hi-Fi Show in February, along with a prototype Creek amplifier, they struck me as very well-balanced and open sounding. Nothing stood out in a false way. So, when the editor suggested some time later that I review a pair, I was keen to have a proper listen with known equipment in my own room, shows are never the best place to judge anything due to so many influencing factors.

I put them on an old pair of rigid 54cm high Epos speaker stands, powered them with a



Creek Destiny amplifier and placed them about 30cm (12") from the rear wall. Signal source was initially my old Sony HAP-Z1es music server streamer, with other streaming sources and vinyl played later, so this review is a compilation of notes taken using various recordings and sources.

Straight away, the Cymatics 6 sounded good, without any need to mess about with positioning. Bass was well articulated – not as strong or deep as a larger floor stander could provide, but good for their size. Treble sounded transparent and nicely textured, yet clean and sweet for a metal-dome tweeter. I've not been a great fan of metal domes in the past, but this seems to be a particularly fine one capable of reproducing layers of insightful, subtle detail and yet remaining pleasant and gentle on the ear. Also, the midrange was delightfully lucid and full of detail without introducing harshness.

But, there was something else. The Cymatics 6 sound stage opened out in a very tangible fashion, separated from the loudspeakers, with the same free-and-easy, natural capability glimpsed at briefly in Bristol. To take a few examples, the bass lines of Kraftwerk's *Planet of Visions* and *Tour de France*, were impressive for a modestly sized stand-mount speaker. The vocals were cavernous, while cymbals were clearly detailed and not at all harsh or emphasised, as one might presume from the tweeter's metal dome. The swishing, swirling synths were characteristically rich in overtones and the audience was laid out with clarity and spaciousness.

Moving on: Roxy Music's *Avalon*, delivered satisfyingly big, lush reverberant soundscapes behind Brian Ferry's seductive crooning, broad synth washes and a delightfully bouncy rhythm driving the pace of this piece. The Cymatics 6 certainly conveyed the sophistication of this layered mix.

Playing Van Morrison's *When the Leaves Come Falling Down* from his *Poetic Champions Compose* album, I felt these speakers really took me to the heart of the track. They were not caught out by his gravelly voice (which can put some speakers to task). Piano, Hammond organ and guitar were sonically precise and tonally rich. More importantly, I was drawn into the reflective meaning and sentiment behind this track, which was very enjoyable.

Swapping to classical, by playing *Questo Mar Rosso*, from Puccini's *La Boheme (Act 1 Scene 1)*, from the classic 1958 Decca recording featuring Tebaldi, Bergonzi et al), the speakers simply melted away revealing the performers in their reverberant setting. In this, and other classical pieces played, the spatial abilities of the Cymatics 6 speakers really shone through, recreating space and depth, when appropriate. For instance, the very fine 24-bit re-master of Rachmaninov's 24 preludes played by Vladimir Ashkenazy was revealed in stunning clarity, and richness.

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They also loved a slab of good vinyl: George Benson's *Give me the Night*, brilliantly produced by Quincy Jones, and engineered by Bruce Swedien, was a treat to the ears, with the Cymatics 6 doing full justice to its lush, polished sound, as *Off Broadway's* infectious propulsive beat and Quincy's vocals flowed effortlessly into the room.

I've experienced James Taylor in concert on many occasions and always enjoyed the experience. His album *One Man Band Live* is a great example of one of his live sessions. It took



me back instantly to those occasions, but instead of his usual band, he is accompanied by keyboardist Larry Goldings. The Cymatics 6 conveyed the live feel of this recording perfectly, as James delivered his songs with commensurate ease. It's difficult to pick a favourite number, but on *Shower the People with Love*, the keyboard, guitar and vocals combined beautifully, with the speakers' clarity bringing them both into fine focus. When the choir added their backing and the audience applauded it was a pure delight. This was not hi-fi, just pure joy!

I could go on giving further examples of jazz rock, classical and so on. There's quite a list in my notes but I hope that what I've said so far gives you a good idea of what this speaker is capable of.

Luke wrote that he has not 'voiced' the Cymatics 6 for any particular sonic balance, preferring to make them as neutral as possible. Their hear-through transparency and fine detail retrieval would make them highly suitable as desk monitors for mixing, as they clearly revealed differences in sound quality between different masterings and sources of the same recordings, DACs, streamers, etc. They are not warm, hazy or forgiving, and consequently don't hide imperfections. So, it's important to partner these speakers with equipment which is up to the task.

Measurements

I'm aware that most readers don't want or need tedious lists of technical measurements, and graphs, but I did run a few tests with my Clio measuring system, just to see how the Cymatics 6 fared. I'll simply say that these measured very well, both on and off axis, with slightly above average sensitivity, low distortion and a trouble-free four-ohm nominal impedance. The frequency responses showed no large deviations which could emphasise or highlight any parts of the audio band (within +/-1.5dB from 300Hz to 20kHz), with a smooth extension towards the bass, and well-suppressed delayed resonances. It was a very good set of results, which

indicates the care put into the speaker's technical design, although Luke was at pains to point out that his primary goal was, as he puts it, 'to preserve the natural architecture of music' rather than achieve a particular measured performance.

Summing up

The Cymatics 6 have a natural, transparent, agile and detailed sound, handling all kinds of music with aplomb and convincingly communicating its meaning. They were not voiced to sound warm or euphonic, and so were not kind to poor sources, equipment or recordings. Their clarity, transparency and spatial abilities brought out the best in good recordings, and revealed differences in mastering and digital resolutions, without highlighting or exaggerating sonic aberrations, which a good loudspeaker should be capable of doing. I judge the Cymatics 6 to be a more than worthy addition to the Creek range and look forward to hearing the models that follow.

Pros

- Exceptionally neutral, transparent and detailed sound
- Wide, open soundstage with excellent imaging
- High-quality drive units and well-engineered cabinet
- Smooth, refined treble despite metal dome tweeter
- Consistent performance on and off axis
- Reveals fine detail and differences between sources

Cons

- Not forgiving of poor recordings or partnering equipment
- Bass depth limited compared to floorstanders
- Requires careful system matching to shine
- Stand-mount design adds extra cost for suitable stands

