



This 5.1 set proves the performance of the US brand's debut S range wasn't a one-off, says **Mark Craven**

# Perlisten asks 'R you ready?'

Just as *Fast & Furious* spun-off into *Hobbs & Shaw*, Perlisten's S Series (HCC #331) has birthed the R Series – and like the *Statham/Rock* movie, it proves nearly as good as the original. In fact, place the loudspeaker ranges next to each other and factor in their price points, and the R Series might even have the edge.

This is not a step-down range engineered from scratch to hit a certain market slot. Rather, Perlisten's R Series takes much of what makes its flagship lineup so impressive, and just dials it down a bit to keep your bank manager sweet. The similarities between the two, across styling, technology and performance, are striking.

## Sense of direction

For example, both S and R offer the same loudspeaker varieties – floorstander, monitor, centre, bookshelf and angled-baffle surround. Both are Certified THX Dominus, meaning they reach THX specifications for rooms 'up to 184 cubic meters' and with six-metre viewing distances. And both feature Perlisten's DPC (Directivity Pattern Control) array.

This is very much the American company's pride and joy. Developed with acoustic modelling software to optimise driver size, position and waveguide, it mounts three units – two mid-range and one tweeter – in an 'acoustic lens' intended to accurately control both horizontal and vertical dispersion.

The DPC is a feature of all the R Series speakers, but is one area where Perlisten has reduced costs. Instead of the beryllium HF dome and thin-ply carbon diaphragm (TPCD) mid-range units of the S Series, all the DPC drivers on the R models use silk diaphragms. Additionally, the bass/mid and bass drivers of the R speakers are a hybrid pulp fibre design, not the TPCD of the S Series. This also means you don't get the funky checkerboard finish.

For this 5.1 system we've used the range-topping R7t floorstander (£8,100p/p) for front left/right, plus the

R5c centre channel (£2,700) and R4b bookshelf (£4,500p/p). The subwoofer model is the R210s, the smaller of two R Series bass-shakers, with dual 10in woofers in a push-pull configuration.

That comes to a total system price of £19,300, which is decidedly premium even while being around 50 per cent cheaper than a similar S Series setup.

At present, the only finish option for all R models is high gloss black – there are none of the cherry, black cherry or ebony 'special editions' this time around. Yet the speakers themselves look remarkably similar to their more expensive stablemates, and once again seem beautifully built. Magnetic circular grilles are provided, letting you choose which drivers to cover up.

## No fear

Having absolutely loved the sound of Perlisten's S Series, I was worried I might be disappointed by these near half-the-price alternatives. Instead I was quickly blown away. The performance here isn't 'half as good', more 'almost as good', particularly with the system used in a moderate-sized room. I can imagine the S Series might pull further away in a cavernous space.

The most clear cut difference is in the top-end, where Perlisten's beryllium tweeter offerings sound more spacious, airy and pristine, particularly when fed some 'audiophile'-grade music. That said, Barb Jungr singing *Sara*, played from a Linn SACD in 5.1, sounded lush through this R Series set – her vocal all gentle vibrato and a finessed rendering of soft sibilants, backed by a piano with real presence.

And when the layered vocals arrived in the chorus, there was a separation to the effect that was extremely well handled.



### AV INFO

**PRODUCT:** Floorstanding THX-certified 5.1 speaker system

**POSITION:** R Series is one rung below Perlisten's Flagship S

**PEERS:** KEF Reference; Monitor Audio Platinum

**1.** The R7t features four 6.5in hybrid pulp fibre woofers, plus mid-range drivers and tweeter in central DPC array

**2.** A dedicated stand (£595) for the R5c matches the outrigger feet of the floorstander models



The R7t floorstanders, with their quartet of 6.5in woofers, also make for a superb listen with two-channel content. Sticking with Super Audio CD, and Lyn Stanley's wonderfully recorded *Live at Studio A* release, the two towers, slightly toed-in and sat around 3m apart, created a wide, detailed image with Stanley a strong, sassy, central presence.

**What's your emergency?**

Swapping jazz for what Michael Bay considers a low-budget, character-driven movie, and *Ambulance* (4K BD) tore out of the R Series with all sirens blaring. The pivotal

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bank robbery sequence, and explosive aftermath, had me squirming with joy. There was so much to savour, from the incredibly lifelike, tactile reproduction of Jake Gyllenhaal's dialogue via the R5c, to the way the R210s subwoofer latched onto the deep notes of the soundtrack and much else besides – even shots of money being stuffed into bags get a bassy swell.

I'm not enough of an artillery geek to know one gun from another, but the R Series conveyed the different tone of each and every one in *Ambulance's* street shootout scene. Meanwhile, the R4bs presented the screams of pedestrians cleanly, and when the soundtrack transitions from front to back as Bay's drone camera swoops, there was an even feel to the soundfield.

Even in 5.1, this system immerses. Tweeters at ear height all round enjoy a wide dispersion while still placing effects with accuracy. The speakers sound essentially invisible, with no subjective colouration at all. Okay, the helicopters that buzz the ambulance on the Los Angeles River don't pass overhead, but it's still a fluid presentation with accuracy and plenty of scale. And when



**SPECIFICATIONS**

**R7t**

**DRIVERS:** 1 x 26mm silk dome tweeter; 2 x 26mm silk dome mid-range; 4 x 6.5in hybrid pulp fibre (HPF) woofers **ENCLOSURE:** Bass reflex/sealed **FREQ. RESP. (CLAIMED):** 27Hz-32kHz (reflex); 38Hz-32kHz (sealed) **SENSITIVITY (CLAIMED):** 90dB **IMPEDANCE (CLAIMED):** 4ohm (nominal) **POWER HANDLING (CLAIMED):** 400W **DIMENSIONS:** 1,268(h) x 230(w) x 350(d)mm **WEIGHT:** 48kg

**R5c**

**DRIVERS:** 1 x 26mm silk dome tweeter; 2 x 26mm silk dome mid-range; 2 x 6.5in HPF woofers **ENCLOSURE:** Sealed **FREQ. RESP. (CLAIMED):** 49Hz-32kHz **SENSITIVITY (CLAIMED):** 88.6dB **IMPEDANCE (CLAIMED):** 4ohm (nominal) **POWER HANDLING (CLAIMED):** 250W **DIMENSIONS:** 240(h) x 550(w) x 270(d)mm **WEIGHT:** 33.5kg

**R4b**

**DRIVERS:** 1 x 26mm silk dome tweeter; 2 x 26mm silk dome mid-range; 1 x 6.5in HPF woofer **ENCLOSURE:** Sealed **FREQ. RESP. (CLAIMED):** 45Hz-32kHz **SENSITIVITY (CLAIMED):** 84.6dB **IMPEDANCE (CLAIMED):** 4ohm (nominal) **POWER HANDLING (CLAIMED):** 200W **DIMENSIONS:** 382(h) x 230(w) x 236(d)mm **WEIGHT:** 9.5kg

**R210s (subwoofer)**

**DRIVERS:** 2 x 10in glass fibre woofers **ENCLOSURE:** Sealed **ONBOARD POWER (CLAIMED):** 1,200W ('short term' RMS) **FREQ. RESP.** 20Hz-289Hz (-6dB) **REMOTE CONTROL:** Yes, via app **DIMENSIONS:** 545(h) x 380(w) x 450(d)mm **WEIGHT:** 44kg **FEATURES:** XLR and RCA input/output; 10-band parametric EQ with three user presets; control/EQ app; 12V trigger; Auto-On; variable phase/crossover

**TESTED WITH**



**AMBULANCE:** Action director Michael Bay broke out of Covid lockdown with a 'small' \$40m movie that looks like it cost five times as much. On 4K Blu-ray its stylised photography packs a real HDR/WCG punch, and the Atmos soundmix never misses the chance to pepper you with precision effects and dramatic LFE.

this scene ends with Bobby Womack's *California Dreamin'*, it positively sings through the speakers.

Sing might be the operative word, in fact. Perlisten's R Series can do bass brutality and soundtrack dynamics, and has a punchy demeanour that's ready for anything. But what elevates it, and makes the asking price seem altogether reasonable, is its tonality, subtlety and clarity.

*Top Gun: Maverick* (4K BD) opens with Harold Faltermeyer's iconic score and it sounded deliciously rich, the low synths a honeyish presence, treble details succinct. The bookshelf surrounds pump out the synths too – and here the sub sounds musical, with buoyant, sweet bass.

Skip to *Maverick's* Mach 9 test, where we start in an echoey aircraft hangar before heading out on the runway. The balance between music and Foley and dialogue is superb, as Perlisten's speakers seem to favour neither one nor the other. Then we're up there with Tom Cruise, flying at a billion miles per hour in the twilight, the subwoofer quietly rumbling and the soundstage large and spacious.

It was an emotional AV experience. Talk to me Goose. Can you lend us £19,300? ■

**3. Our setup used the three-way R4b bookshelf for surround channels**

**HCC VERDICT**



**Perlisten R Series 5.1**

→ £19,300 → [www.perlistenaudio.com](http://www.perlistenaudio.com)

**WE SAY:** This smart-looking, premium-build 5.1 array matches its high price with a breathtaking performance. The R Series sound is detailed, accurate, full-range and utterly immersive.