



Bryston Model T Signature

Canadian brand Bryston is most often associated with rock-solid, heirloom-quality power amplifiers, and the 20 year warranty that accompanies them. Built to last, these are audio devices that have stood the test of the time in both engineering and sonic terms, and they continue to occupy a hallowed position in the portals of high-end hi-fi.

Of course, there's a lot more to Bryston than power amps: pre-amps, streamers and DACs have been part of the product offering for some time. But until very recently, loudspeakers weren't in the catalogue.

It turns out that Bryston sales and marketing vice president James Tanner had been embarking on a personal R&D project, with the objective of creating the ultimate all-round loudspeaker – a speaker that, in his words, would deliver full-scale dynamics, tonal neutrality and crystal clarity, as well as an ability to capture the music's nuances.

Tanner's idea was to create a speaker system good enough to assess Bryston electronics in his home listening room. The resulting multi-driver, floorstanding speaker would become known as the Model T.

It sounded so good that Tanner was persuaded to turn his personal project into a full-blown Bryston product line, comprising not only the Model T, but two complete speaker ranges, known as the T Line and the A Line.

Under scrutiny here is the Model T Signature – effectively the speaker that started the Bryston loudspeaker ball rolling. It's a tall, even imposing design, with no less than nine drive units, arranged vertically along a fairly narrow baffle.

The cabinet tapers towards the rear to combat standing waves, is supported on coupling spikes, and is fashioned from thick, solid MDF, to ensure rigidity and inertness. The enclosure is heavily braced both laterally and longitudinally, and can be dressed in a plethora of simulated and



real veneers.

The rear features no less than three ports, mounted high up in the cabinet, and fluted to address turbulence and port noise. As the review pair were the Signature versions, they feature an external crossover network, as opposed to the

internal device of the normal model.

The driver array consists of three 200 mm woofers, featuring ceramic-coated aluminium domes, cast aluminium baskets and large motor systems. These are followed by a pair of similarly equipped, but downsized 140 mm midrange drivers,

while the top part of the baffle is equipped by a duo of 25 mm titanium dome tweeters.

Given how tall the speakers are, the tweeters end up being located well above ear height, which suggests an elevated soundstage.

The audition took place at importer Aeolian's demonstration room, which is a wide space, allowing the speakers to be located well away from rear and side walls in what was effectively a free-standing position, with the Model T's toed in towards the listening position, but not completely on axis.

I listened to the speakers in the company of two different power amps – Bryston's own, legendary 4B-SST2, and a far dearer (and somewhat more sonically sophisticated) Burmester 911. The front end remained essentially the same combination of Esoteric Audio pre-amp, Bryston BDP-1 digital player and Berkeley Alpha DAC II.

Initial impressions were of a clean, open and crisply focussed sonic image, delivered with a powerful sense of depth and dimension. The sound was remarkably accessible and relaxed, underplaying the actual agility and responsiveness of the speaker, but allowing the rhythm and tempo of the performance to be rendered with believable precision.

Damien Rice's 'The Blower's Daughter' off his *O* set is a deceptively simple song, dominated by his almost hesitant vocals, and accompanied by an acoustic guitar and a beautifully resonant cello.

For all their bombastic presence, the Model Ts managed to extract and project the subtleties and fine strands of this performance with such confidence, such conviction, that the artists seemed to have been transported right there, in front of me, in the room.

The Brystons afforded the music plenty of breathing space, but they didn't exaggerate the sound either, retaining the sense of close-miked intimacy of the recording, and capturing every intake of breath, each slide of a finger on the

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fretboard, every stroke of the cello's bow.

Just how revealing the Model Ts are was illustrated when we swapped the 4B-SST for Burmester's much grander, and much dearer, 911 power amp. The speakers instantly and succinctly revealed the change, delivering an even more detailed, more closely resolved (and certainly more controlled) rendition of the music.

That's not to say that the 4B's performance was inferior (after all, it had sounded pretty compelling when I first sat down to listen to the Model Ts). But with the Burmester in charge, the music had more body and substance, the guitar's presence was almost tactile, and Rice's voice was projected with even greater immediacy.

The lower registers were projected with more authority – in fact, there was

VITAL STATS

Enclosure type	Bass-reflex, rear-ported
Drive units	3x 203 mm aluminium cone woofers 2x 140 mm aluminium cone midrange 2x 25 mm titanium tweeters
Bi-wiring	External crossover
Impedance	4 ohms nominal
Sensitivity	89 dB
Frequency response	25 Hz – 25 kHz
Power handling	500 watts RMS max
Dimensions (HxWxD).....	1 334 x 267 x 419 mm
Weight	48,5 kg each

PRICE..... R107 200

VERDICT

These big, multi-driver floorstanders can rock and roll with the best of them, but their real talent lies in their ability to reveal, and to entertain, regardless of genre.

SUPPLIED BY

Aeolian
011-487-2254

e-MAIL

ans@aeolian.co.za

WEBSITE

www.aeolian.co.za

OUR RATING: 84 / 100





just more of the music in overall terms, but without becoming overpowering. Even better, that sense of musical poise, of effortlessness and accessibility, was retained even at louder volumes. The result was an engaging listening experience.

Bruce Cockburn's *Barefoot in New Orleans*, *Dinner in Timbuktu* is another deceptive set, with strong melodies

and lucid arrangements creating the impression of simplicity. And yes, that's certainly true of 'Isn't That What Friends Are For', but in an achingly elegant, deeply moving way.

Most speakers will find it easy enough to render the sonics involved – but the emotive quality, the attack and timbre, the revelation of layers behind layers, and the careful, circumspect placing

of voices and instruments on a deep, expansive soundstage – those elements were heeded and exposed with a grace and care unusual for such large, complex, multi-driver speaker.

And therein lies the unexpected talent of the Model Ts: you'd expect the makers of Bryston power amps to produce speakers that can sound big and play loud, that can paint a massive soundstage in bold,

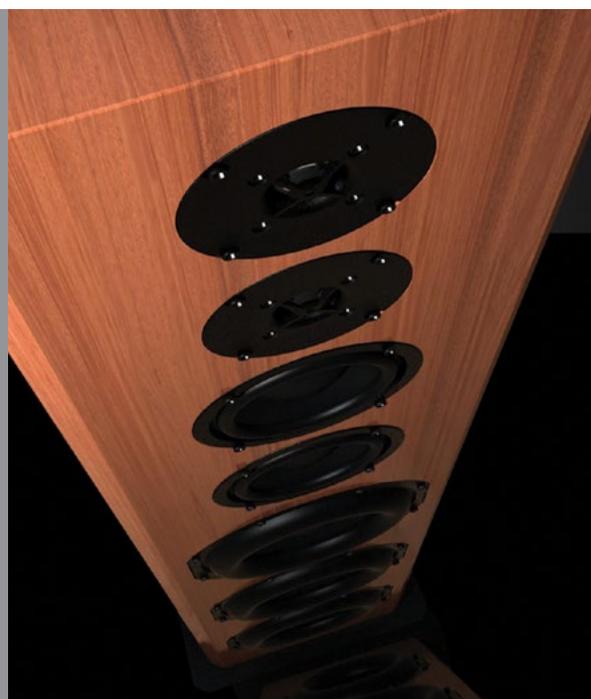
Of Note

Bespoke drivers

One of the stand-out features of the Bryston Model 8 is its nine-driver array, all vertically arranged on the floorstander's narrow baffle. The drive units are bespoke, developed by Bryston in conjunction with Canadian speaker specialist Axiom.

The drive units are manufactured for Bryston by Axiom, which was also involved in the overall development of the Model T, as well as the other speakers in the T-line and A-line ranges. However, the drivers are not off-the-shelf Axiom designs – they were specifically designed for Bryston, with a particular focus on efficiency, high power handling and ultra-low distortion.

The drivers were designed and developed using advanced modelling and finite analysis tools, before their performance and durability were verified in Bryston's anechoic chamber using accelerated durability testing methods.



Associated Equipment

Esoteric Audio C-03 pre-amp
Bryston BDP-1 digital streamer
Berkeley Audio Designs Alpha DAC II D/A converter
Bryston 4B-SST2 power amp
Burmester 911 power amp

Software

Damien Rice – O (Warner)
Bruce Cockburn – Breakfast in New Orleans, Dinner in Timbuktu (True North Records)
Boz Scaggs – My Time (Columbia)

confident strokes, that can ace the sternest dynamic challenge. And the Model Ts manage all of this.

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Bryston's Tanner wanted a speaker that could do big and bold, as well as intimate and subtle – a speaker that was both dynamically exciting and ultimately revealing, without losing sight of the music's essence. The Model T achieves just that – and that's no mean feat.

Deon Schoeman