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## New Products Reviewed

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Genelec • Ingram Engineering • IsoAcoustics • Positive Grid • Sonodyne



# Sonodyne

## SRP 400 Active Monitors

Great sound comes to small spaces



Sonodyne is an audio company based in India with a 40-year history in the business, one that's just beginning to attract serious attention here in the USA. The designers and engineers at Sonodyne do everything in-house, from initial concepts to industrial design, prototyping, sourcing and manufacturing.

Sonodyne's full line includes products for the home hi-fi market, commercial installs, and the pro audio industry. Its pro monitor lines are the SM Series and the SRP Series (plus the SLF subwoofers). The SM Series is the upper line with six models, while the more budget-oriented SRP Series currently has 4 models to choose from. In a review in our February 2013 issue, Lorenz Ryncher found the SM200Ak to be "powerful, balanced, and honest to the ears."

This month we take our first look at the SRP line with the SRP 400. The SRP line, aside from the very smallest SRP 300, has quite similar design and build; models are available with 3.5", 4.5", 5", 6", and 8" woofers. With its 4.5" woofer, the SRP 400 is one of the "babies" of the SRP Series, intended for small and intimate listening spaces.

### Heavy metal and curves

Each model of the SRP line starts with a pressure die-cast aluminum enclosure. The SRP 400 measures 9.13" x 6.3" x 6.1" and weighs 9.7 lbs. It is dense, rigid and heavy for its size, which is a good

quality for a speaker to have. The SRP 400 rests on 4 small rubber loose-fitting feet, that allow the speaker a nominal bit of float and decoupling. These feet, which are prone to falling out, were one of my only construction gripes with these monitors; Sonodyne informs us that this has been corrected and improved on current units.

The 1" silk dome tweeter sits inside a waveguide that is molded into the cabinet and designed to minimize reflections for a wider and more honest soundstage. Moving to the woofer, while the upper end models make use of woven kevlar, the SRP 400 features a 4.5" CURV cone. CURV is a woven, self-reinforced polypropylene material with excellent internal damping, manufactured by Norwegian company Seas. At the bottom of the box is a front-firing aerodynamic bass port.

Internally the SRP 400 is biamplified; each driver has a 25 Watt amplifier, and the crossover frequency is 3 kHz. It has a frequency response of 75 Hz to 22 kHz ( $\pm 2$  dB) and a maximum peak SPL of 100 dB.

On the front of the cabinet is a power switch with blue LED power light, as well as a volume knob that controls output level from muted to +6 dB, with a 0 dB center detent. On the back of the unit are 4 equalization DIP switches. The first is a Bass Roll Off (100 Hz, 6 dB/octave). Then there are two Bass Tilt switches,



which can be used separately or together for  $-2$ ,  $-4$ , or  $-6$  dB of shelving at 100 Hz. The last switch is a  $-2$  dB Treble Tilt at 4 kHz. XLR and  $1/4$ " TRS input connectors, a  $1/4$ " TRS Link connection to connect the other half of a stereo pair of speakers in a daisy-chain, and an IEC power cable socket complete the back.

### In use

I spent a few weeks with the SRP 400 monitors, first using them as a second set of small reference monitors in my studio, The Moss Garden. I then moved them to my office at Grace Church, where I work as the Technical Director and do a huge amount of podcast audio work—mixing the musical portion of Sunday Services as well as voiceovers for videos. Finally, I took them home to my small and cozy music listening room/edit suite. This speaks to the first big plus of the SRP 400: they are highly portable and make a great traveling speaker if you have such a need.

In my studio, which is a fully treated and trapped mix room, I put them up alongside my usual KRK E8b monitors—not for comparison's sake, but because I always like to have a set of smaller secondary monitors to aid me in my mixes and give me more of a sense of real-world listening.

Since my KRKs are a good distance back and wide in the listening field, putting the SRP 400s beside them was not the most optimal positioning. While these speakers can get nice and loud, their low end was quickly swallowed up in this space. Their mids and highs do sit very nicely, however, and were great for seating vocals and mid-forward guitar tones in

the mix. Placing the SRP 400s on my desk, closer to my mix position, helped a lot. The speakers offered better perceived fullness and balance the closer they got to my ears.

### Office space

Moving them to my office, I put them up alongside a couple of pairs of less expensive monitors with 5" woofers. My editing position faces out into the room, so there are zero wall reflections in front of me, and I often turn my speakers around the other way, so others can listen to music and mixes once my work is done.

The monitors with the 5" woofers had more low-end extension and were more easily "crankable," but the SRP 400s held their own. It would be easy to talk about the Sonodynes as "bass shy", but that would be a mistake. The 4.5" woofer can't compete with a larger driver for sheer amount of low end, but we have to think about quality of bass, not just quantity. The SRP 400's low end is tight, focused and honest, making the less expensive 5" sound a tad mushy and hyped by comparison. You really can hear what you're paying for.

In my office, I did find it necessary to tilt the high end down with the switch on the back for louder listening. Once that was done, all in all the Sonodynes gave me exactly the tightness and imaging that I expect from a compact studio monitor, and then some.

### Home (really) sweet home

I then moved the SRP 400s to my listening room at home, where I also occasionally do in-the-box editing, which is where I found this monitor really shines. It's a small space that requires speaker placement up against a wall, with my head right by the speaker cones. My main speakers here are a pair of (far too large) speakers with folded-ribbon tweeters and 8" woofers that are just used for kicking back and enjoying high-def audio playback rather

than serious work. I also have a pair of older 4" pro monitors that I often use to check mixes.

In this small space, the SRP 400s showed off great imaging and depth, with a tight bass; nothing sounded or felt exaggerated in the mix. The highs and mids in the SRP 400s are focused and accurate, and they are absolutely non-fatiguing, even with them set mere inches from your ears at moderate volume for hours of editing. I didn't even need to turn on the High Tilt. For small room editing I have always preferred the punchy focused bass and overall sound found on 4.5" monitors over 5" and 6" models, and these were no exception.

One more observation: while we often think about how loudly we can crank our speakers, the Sonodyne SRP 400s are among the best low-to-moderate-volume monitors I have ever used. If you need to work quietly and better yet comfortably, or are tired of headphone mixing in your dorm or apartment, these are a great option. They sound fantastic at this volume level and they retain a beautiful fullness and accuracy.

### Conclusions

I started my journey with these speakers worrying that they might turn out to be "budget mini monitors," and I was quickly proven wrong. As I mentioned, I love the tight bass and accuracy of a good 4.5" monitor. The SRP 400 is not a good 4.5" monitor... it's a *great* 4.5" monitor.

Bedroom, dorm room, on the go, or up close in a full fledged studio, these are great little speakers. I will go back to Lorenz's previous Sonodyne review and echo his phrase: "Honest to the ears, what more could you ask for?" ➡

**Price:** \$395 each (\$349 street)

**More from:** Sonodyne, [www.sonodyne.com](http://www.sonodyne.com); dist. in USA by TransAudio Group, [www.transaudiogroup.com](http://www.transaudiogroup.com)