

LEGEND

Mob1 AV Speaker System

Distributor:

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Price: \$3,950 (complete)

Since its inception, Legend Acoustics has marketed its loudspeakers equally for surround applications, as it has for stereo use. For

many in fact, the famous fast and open sound of Legend speakers is just as relevant to an action packed car chase scene, as it is to a full scale symphonic orchestra. And for this reason, Legend is probably just as much a darling of the home theatre set as it is of stereo fans.

Proof of Legend's commitment to surround sound is its comprehensive range of 5.1 speaker packages. At its height, these systems can include no less than tower speakers right around the listening field, but the system for review here is the baby of the bunch, the Mob 1. Ideally suited for small to medium rooms, the Mob 1 is a sub/satellite system, which incorporates both direct firing and omni-directional speakers.

At the front is a pair of the Joey 4 mini-monitors. These are a 2-way bookshelf loudspeaker, capable of getting down to about 55Hz. The centre channel dialogue speaker is a Kanga 4 monitor, which is a 2½-way design. Its drivers are arrayed in a d'Appolito style, with a woofer either side of the silk dome tweeter. In the rear is a pair of dipole speakers known as the Roo 4. These use the same woofers and tweeters as the Joey 4s, creating a uniform sound field when used with other Legend speakers.

And finally the subwoofer - the Kurllette is based on its big brother the Kurlo and just like that subwoofer, the Kurllette uses a sealed cabinet for improved speed and transient response.

The subwoofer's 25cm, extra long throw driver is driven by an internal amplifier, capable of a maximum output of 250 watts. The large cooling fins on the back of the sub are testament to

this. Guiding the entire show is a very large voice-coil and huge 3kg magnet. Just try lifting the Kurllette up and you'll feel every one of its 18 kilos. In all, the cone has an excursion of some 20mm, making it equivalent to a 30cm unit with a normal throw of 6-8mm. Legend claim the Kurllette it is capable of producing the loudest, deepest sounds and musical notes with ease.

When you do go to a retail store to audition the Legends, I'd recommend that you first just take a good look at the speakers and hold them in your hands. The build quality is magnificent. The cabinets are made here in Australia of particularly high-density particleboard. The cabinet of the Kurllette for instance is 18mm thick all around with the front baffle a mighty 40mm. Hitting it with a knuckle is akin to knocking on the vault door of the Reserve Bank. After taking a moment to look at the thickness of the front baffle, admire the ingenious way that the Lycra grill stretches around the edge. The quality of the speakers is on show for all to see. The same care and attention is paid to the internals of the speakers with crossover networks hand assembled by Legend.

A benefit of purchasing a complete speaker system such as the Mob 1 is that you can ensure that the speakers are well matched tonally. The Joey 4, Kanga 4 and Roo 4 all use the same mid-drivers, while both the Roos and the Joys share the same tweeter. Integration between the different speakers therefore is assured.

With set-up, you have a couple of options, depending on the shape of the room you are in. There are a few constants however, such as you'll want to get the centre speaker as close the television as is possible, so as to maintain continuity between the sound and the pictures. The front left and right speakers obviously should be

by Michael
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spaced evenly apart, either side of the video. If you are still using a standard Cathode Ray Tube (CRT) television (and don't worry, there are plenty of videophiles who'll back you up on that decision), you needn't worry about the speakers interfering with the picture as they're magnetically shielded. That is except for the Kurlette of course, whose 3kg magnet would probably have to be encased in pure kryptonite before its effects were contained.

While the system itself would still qualify as being compact, it's nowhere near as small as some surround sound speaker packages you see around the place; and this is generally a good thing. Having tiny monitors and a subwoofer is far from the ideal. The smaller your speakers are, the greater the frequencies that have to be handled by the subwoofer. And as the subwoofer is a mono speaker, you'll find that a good deal of the sound of the film soundtrack will be localised there, rather than experiencing a true surround effect. The Joey 4 monitors are smallish speakers, but they are still capable of getting down to 50Hz. It is only at this point that the Kurlette steps in to extend the frequency down to 25Hz. The effect is an even tone right through the 360° listening area. Don't be tempted therefore to adjust the subwoofer too high up the frequency range. It's best to let the speakers do the job they were designed to do and let the subwoofer handle the rest.

Dr. Rod Crawford, Legend's chief designer, is a man after my own heart in many ways. A physicist and metallurgist by trade, he likes to deal in facts and reality, rather than the ethereal and vague. While some audiophiles get misty cycled at the mention of a turntable and vinyl, Dr. Rod won't have a bar of it. Give him a Telarc Super Audio CD any day of the week. Far more accurate and true to life than some woolly Decca recording from the 1930s. The vinyl might be pleasant enough to listen to, but just how close is it getting you to the original performance?

The same thinking goes into his loudspeakers. Great care is taken to minimise colouration, particularly resonances that give many speakers that warm but fuzzy sound and make all recordings sound 'nice'. Instead, Legend speakers are designed to start and stop with incredible speed and accuracy, reproducing faithfully the lowest and highest level of detail. And it's partly because of the blinding transients Legend speakers are such a natural choice for home theatre.

On *Spider-man 2*, the sound zinged around my room as Toby McGuire swung away from the advancing Dr. Octopus. As cars were lifted up from the road and smashed into buildings, the sound was coming from all around me and I was immersed in chaotic mayhem. Then later, as rain pounded down and thunder crashed from the sky, I could hear every word of dialogue from Kirsten Dunst as she ran for

cover. I don't mind admitting that I enjoy this film quite a bit and turned the volume well up. The speakers handled the juice without complaint. The Kurlette is a little powerhouse of a subwoofer, faithfully pumping out the lower register throughout. It too responded well with the volume up. It didn't appear to raise too much a sweat actually, although the cooling fins do heat up after a couple of hours of use.

The Mob 1 handled finer details beautifully. *Gladiator* is full of all kinds of sound effects, such as that of a hand moving through grass in the opening scene to the rattle and creaking of the empress' carriage as it travels through the provinces. All of it was conveyed convincingly and with authority. The excellent Roo 4 rear speakers helped this in large part. The ambient information of the back channels was nicely diffused by the bipolar design. In the end though I thought they sounded best when hung up behind my listening position on the rear wall. From there they created a good omnidirectional sound. Experiment however to see what works best in your room.

The analytical and revealing nature of the Legend Mob 1 means that they are really best when partnered with quality equipment. If they are fed an inferior signal, then they aren't going to do a great deal to make it sound any better than it does. Hook them into good equipment however and you have the makings of a reference surround sound system. **WLS2005**