

Definitive Technology Mythos ST Super Tower Speaker System

Mythos the magnificent.



BY DARRYL WILKINSON

It's not often that I find something to complain about when it comes to Definitive Technology, but, lately, I have cause. Every year, during each of the two major consumer electronics trade shows, CES and CEDIA, I (and plenty of other journalists, dealers, and a few hangers-on who shouldn't have been let in to begin with) have made the traditional pilgrimage to the Def Tech booth. We go there, drawn like corn-bread muffins to butter, to hear the latest Def Tech incarnation, thanks to the genius of head honcho Sandy Gross and company.

good, look good, and simply make audible sense (rather than having a \$299, \$399, \$499, fill-in-the-blank approach). In fact, these guys have hit more home runs than Babe Ruth, Hank Aaron, Mark McGwire, and Barry Bonds combined—all without accusations of illegal steroid use. But, to continue the baseball analogy, visiting the Def Tech booth is a bit like going to the Home Run Derby before the All-Star Game. It's tremendously exciting at first, but, after a while, the excess of success leads you to take it all for granted—and soon you're heading out to get a beer and a hot dog. Of course, that doesn't make the

As you would expect, some of these speaker introductions have been more exciting than others—the unveiling of the first Mythos speakers being one of the extra-special highlights in recent memory. Regardless, the Definitive Technology booth never disappoints.

Ah, but there's the rub. More than almost any other company, Def Tech has come up with speakers that sound

achievement any less of an achievement. It just means that, once you've seen a ball reach the upper decks, the ones that land just over the wall in the bleachers don't get quite as much applause as they should.

I'm sure the self-imposed stress that comes from pushing yourself to continue to amaze and delight fans (and frustrate competitors) must be enormous. So, when you hear things like “the best thing we've ever done” coming from the confident but unpretentious group at Definitive, you can't help but think that either the pressure has finally gotten to them or they've come up with something truly special.

Mythos Optimus

This year's unveiling was of a speaker that Sandy Gross had been hinting at for months—the mother of all Mythos speakers, the Mythos ST. The Mythos line, in case you're unfamiliar with it, was revolutionary when it first appeared several years ago. (Since then, many other speaker companies have brought out similar designs.) Mythos speakers are very slender, with curved aluminum cabinets, and are available as floorstanding towers and on-wall/bookshelf speakers. In other words, they aren't rectangular boxes, and they exhibit a bit more style than is typical.

At the time of their introduction, however, unlike the majority of the

other stylishly svelte speakers available up to that time, the Mythos speakers sounded good—*really* good to me. And they didn't carry the standard exorbitant "style" surcharge. Since then, Def Tech has continued to refine the Mythos concept, adding floorstanding and on-wall models of various sizes.

I can't quite call the new Mythos ST a refinement; and, yet, it's not a revolution, either, since it's so firmly grounded in its Mythosological heritage. But the ST is dramatically different—the emphasis being on "drama." Whereas all of the previous Mythos models possessed style and class, the Mythos ST adds gravitas, a sense of sophistication and strength. It's something that's not easy to come by, even in much more expensive speakers. The best way to characterize this powerful new beauty is to call it an achievement. In fact, the Mythos ST may well be the ultimate achievement of the Mythos milieu—a true *tour de Mythos*.

Mythmaker

In order to maintain their slender form factor, Mythos speakers rely on relatively small midbass drivers. They sound good on their own, but Def Tech designed the series to be used with a powered subwoofer. The Mythos STs depart from that tradition by including a powered woofer in each tower, as do many of Definitive Technology's other speakers. Def Tech designed this particular woofer specifically for the Mythos ST; it uses a new 6-by-10-inch "race-track" (oval) active driver that's acoustically coupled with a pair of similarly sized planar passive radiators. A 300-watt internal digital amp powers the driver. Definitive claims the built-in woofer is the sonic equivalent of their \$1,199 SuperCube I standalone powered

subwoofer. But the Mythos ST's overall form factor and basic proportions are similar to those of the other Mythos models. The result is a speaker that exudes power and class.

The 1-inch aluminum dome tweeter in the Mythos ST is new from the ground up, including a new voice coil and high-energy magnet, a new dome design, a new surround, and a faceplate that's acoustically contoured for better dispersion. The two 5.25-inch midbass drivers use what Definitive calls Balanced

Double Surround System technology. These circular drivers have the expected flexible surround for suspension around the cone's outside edge, as well as a second surround near the cone's apex.

The system that Def Tech sent me consisted of a pair of the Mythos STs, a Mythos Eight for the center channel, and a pair of Mythos Gem XL speakers for the surrounds. The Mythos Eight is an on-wall speaker that you can use horizontally or vertically. It has two 5.25-inch midbass

AT A GLANCE DEFINITIVE TECHNOLOGY MYTHOS ST SUPERTOWER SPEAKER SYSTEM

SPEAKER:

Type:

Tweeter (size in inches, type):

Midrange (size in inches, type):

Woofer (size in inches, type):

Nominal Impedance (ohms):

Recommended Amp Power (watts):

Available Finishes:

Dimensions (H x W x D, inches):

Weight (pounds):

Price:

MYTHOS ST SUPERTOWER

Three-way, tower

1, aluminum dome

5.25, midrange (2)

5.25, upper mid (2)

6 x 10, active

6 x 10, passive (2)

4-8

20-350

Silver, Gloss Black

51.5 x 6.75 x 9.5

75

\$1,799/each

MYTHOS EIGHT

Three-way, center

1, aluminum dome

5.25, midbass (2)

5.25, passive (2)

4-8

10-250

Silver, Gloss Black

6.1 x 28.5 x 4.375

14.5

\$699

MYTHOS GEM XL

Two-way, monitor

1, aluminum dome

4.5, midbass (2)

N/A

4-8

10-200

Silver, Gloss Black

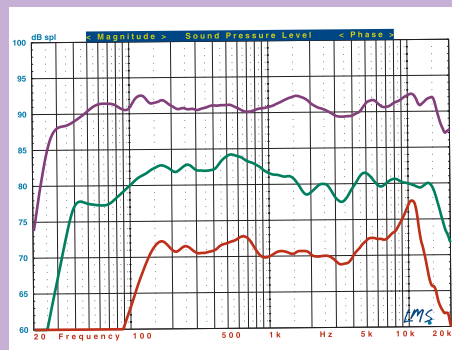
12.625 x 4.5 x 5.5

6

\$349/each

These listings are based on the manufacturer's stated specs; the HT Labs box below indicates the gear's performance on our test bench.

HT Labs Measures: Definitive Technology Mythos ST SuperTower Speaker System



••• L/R Sensitivity:
91 dB from 500 Hz to 2 kHz

••• Center Sensitivity:
91 dB from 500 Hz to 2 kHz

••• Surround Sensitivity:
89.5 dB from 500 Hz to 2 kHz

This graph shows the quasi-anechoic (employing close-miking of all woofers) frequency response of the Mythos ST L/R (purple trace), Mythos Eight

center channel (green trace), and Mythos Gem XL surround (red trace). All passive loudspeakers were measured with grilles at a distance of 1 meter with a 2.83-volt input and scaled for display purposes.

The Mythos ST's listening-window response (a five-point average of axial and +/-15-degree horizontal and vertical responses) measures +1.28/-1.68 decibels from 200 hertz to 10 kilohertz. The -3-dB point is at 30 Hz, and the -6-dB point is at 26 Hz. Impedance reaches a minimum of 5.21 ohms at 356 Hz and a phase angle of -36.19 degrees at 179 Hz.

The Mythos Eight's listening-window response measures +2.18/-4.55 dB from 200 Hz to 10 kHz. An average of axial and +/-15-degree horizontal responses measures +2.21/-4.88 dB from 200 Hz to 10 kHz. The -3-dB point is at 88 Hz, and the -6-dB point is at 66 Hz. Impedance reaches a minimum of 4.63 ohms at 247 Hz and a phase angle of -51.51 degrees at 139 Hz.

The Mythos Gem XL's listening-window response measures +6.06/-1.73 dB from 200 Hz to 10 kHz. The -3-dB point is at 120 Hz, and the -6-dB point is at 106 Hz. Impedance reaches a minimum of 3.98 ohms at 288 Hz and a phase angle of -49.63 degrees at 158 Hz.—MJP

drivers that are acoustically coupled to a pair of 5.25-inch pressure-driven radiators and a single 1-inch aluminum dome. The Gem XL comes with a bracket for on-wall mounting, or you can use it with optional stands. It includes two 4.5-inch midbass drivers that fire askew from the speaker's forward-facing 1-inch aluminum dome tweeter. Def Tech didn't send a separate subwoofer (nor did they need to), due to the might of the Mythos STs' built-in woofers.

The Sound of Sublime

While the rest of the speakers in the Mythos line are striking (in both sound quality and looks), the Mythos STs are simply sublime. It doesn't take long to realize it, either. **Dave Kakenmaster, Definitive's regional sales manager and a veritable fount of great music recommendations, introduced me to Kathy Kosins' *Vintage* CD. As far as I'm concerned, as a songstress, Kosins is everything Diana Krall should be. The new tweeters in the Mythos STs were fabulous at bringing out the subtleties in Kosins' silky, sultry voice, and the brief bass-clarinet solo at the beginning of "Go Slow" showed the graceful blend between the tweeters and the midbass drivers. (By the way, if you order a copy of *Vintage* from www.kathykosins.com and mention "Mythos ST review," Kosins will sign the disc and ship it at no additional charge.)**

While it's not as great a recording as Kosins' CD, blues-guitarist Coco

Montoya's *Dirty Deal* disc is full of gritty life and energy, and the Mythos STs were just as adept at letting loose as they were at getting up close and personal. The built-in woofers showed their mettle on Godsmack's amazing dueling-drum video, "Batalla de los Tambores." The racetrack drivers sound tight and are just as capable of blowing you out of the room as any good standalone powered subwoofer. In the case of the Godsmack video, one benefit of having powered woofers in each tower was that I felt the impact of individual pressure waves from the left and right drum sets. You wouldn't experience that with a single subwoofer in the room.

The entire system functions spectacularly well as one cohesive whole when it comes to home theater. When Saladin attacks Jerusalem in *Kingdom of Heaven* with giant trebuchets flinging what sound like nuclear fireballs, I wondered how it was that the city walls held up to even one direct hit—and then I began to wonder if my own walls would survive. (And then I wondered if my brain would survive the inanity of the movie itself.) The Gem XLs proved to be a great match for the Mythos STs as the fireworks flew back and forth. Likewise, the Mythos Eight performed well as the center channel during dialogue-heavy scenes, especially when King Baldwin speaks from behind the silver mask.

Although Definitive touts the Mythos Eight as a matching center

HIGHLIGHTS

- The first Mythos speakers with powered woofers built in
- Incredibly smooth performance from newly designed tweeters
- Racetrack-style oval woofers help maintain slender shape

channel, I hope a Mythos ST center channel is in the works. The Mythos Eight is great, but having the fluidity of the Mythos ST's tweeters and the strength of those midbass drivers in a center channel would make an already phenomenal system absolutely unbelievable.

One of the sweeter aspects of Def Tech's Mythos line has been its surprising affordability. The Mythos STs, at \$1,799 each, will certainly be a budget stretcher for many people. But, if there's any way short of risking time in a federal penitentiary to get the cash, this is the floorstanding speaker I'd recommend that you buy. You'd have to spend gobs more money to get anything else that offers this combination of performance and beauty. The Mythos STs are an audiophile's speaker wrapped in an interior designer's cabinet that sells for much less than you'd expect to pay for either.

This isn't just an upper-deck shot. Definitive Technology hit this one out of the park. 🏆

| DEFINITIVE TECHNOLOGY MYTHOS ST SUPERTOWER SPEAKER SYSTEM | | | | | OVERALL RATING |
|---|--|--|--|---|---|
| Build Quality | Value | Features | Performance | Ergonomics | 95 It's extremely rare to find a system that offers performance for both music and movies in a package that looks this stunning. And it's even more rare to find it at this price. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Aluminum monocoque cabinet is extremely dense and nonresonant → Granite base is attractive, but attach carefully to avoid noisy air leaks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Sound, looks, and construction this good are almost impossible to find at anywhere near this price | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → LFE inputs on Mythos STs for optional use → On-wall brackets included with center and surrounds | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Has dynamic bass response with serious punch → Smooth transition between surrounds and fronts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Center and surrounds are designed for on-wall or off-wall use → You don't even have to consider using a separate subwoofer | |
| 97 | 93 | 93 | 98 | 94 | |
| General information | | | | | |
| Mythos ST SuperTower Powered Tower Speaker, \$1,799/each; Mythos Eight On-Wall Center-Channel Speaker, \$699/each Mythos Gem XL Surround Speaker, \$349/each → Definitive Technology, (410) 363-7148, www.definitivetechnology.com → Dealer Locator Code DEF | | | | | |