



Behind the music

• Stewart Tyler, ProAc MD and founder



Helped by our work on the Carbon Pro range, we had learned quite a lot about carbon fibre as a cone material for the D40. After we make the cone it is sent to David Lythe at Volt who assembles it in our chassis.

This job entails coating the CF cone on the back and add concentric weighting to increase mass. The finished product is very fast and detailed with almost no colouration.

We decided to make a cone that would cover frequencies up to 2.5kHz, which meant different weights and weaves. It's a long and expensive ride to get these cones right, but well worth it when you hear the results.

We devised a new type of bass loading, placing two aluminium bars between port and plinth. This loads air under the cabinet and couples it better with the air in the room.

Striking looks and fine build grab you, but then these speakers stand aside to put the music first

Downward-firing port helps to ease placement issues; keep that ribbon tweeter at ear height



WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION



ProAc Response D40/R

Make way for **stereo speakers** that make way for the music in all its glory

Profile

Price £6125 ★★★★★

What makes them special? These ProAc's stand out for their carefully considered engineering rather than innovative use of technology, and are none the worse for that

Tempted? ProAc is no stranger to producing fantastically musical speakers, and that's more than enough to turn our heads. We hope the D40/Rs keep up that tradition

We could stretch this out a little, but we won't: ProAc's Response D40/Rs are wonderful. So there you have our verdict. Want to know more?

OK then, these are speakers to judge in a listening room, not on technology content or specification. As with almost every ProAc speaker we've reviewed it's not as if the technical ingredients suggest anything special. A rectangular MDF cabinet and dual 16.5cm carbon fibre mid/bass drivers (ProAc's own design) don't exactly get the heart racing, though the inclusion of a ribbon tweeter sparks our interest just a little.

As always, it's the details that mark the difference between ordinary and extraordinary. That cabinet may be a conventional MDF box, but it's very solidly made and immaculately finished.

The reflex

The cabinet features a downward-firing reflex port arrangement, where the port exits into a gap between the base of the cabinet and a plinth. The idea behind this is to get the port to drive the air in the room in a more consistent manner, making the speakers less fussy about placement.

There is a soft-dome-equipped version of this speaker, simply called the D40. It's available for around £250 less, but the ribbon version is the one that sells best.

At 120cm tall, the Response D40/Rs are big speakers, and they need a decently large room to make sense both visually and sonically. They sound best when given plenty of room to breathe. That

unusual port arrangement works well though, and they weren't that fussy about their position in our listening room. Just keep that ribbon at ear height - it has quite a narrow vertical dispersion.

Electrically, there's little here that will worry any decent amplifier. These floorstanders are pretty sensitive at 90dB/W/m, so highish volume levels from relatively low-powered amps are possible.

We'd go the high-powered route, if given the choice. The D40/Rs are capable of huge dynamic swings and massive volume levels, so it would be a shame not to use these abilities to their full extent.

Once we heard old favourites such as the *Inception* OST delivered with such blood and thunder it was hard to do without it. That said, these speakers have no trouble weaving a spell at lower volumes too.

Some may prefer a more attacking sound, but for us these ProAc's, lose none of the drive or excitement of The Dead Weather's *60 Feet Tall*. Their rhythmic precision is good, and the interplay between instruments is handled brilliantly.



There's an exceptional level of transparency here, coupled to a superb level of detail resolution. These towers have the insight to take apart a track as complicated as Radiohead's *15 Step*, but they never sound too clinical, preferring to push the music's message to the fore.

It's hard to make a speaker that goes deep yet still sounds fast, but ProAc has managed it. Despite their massive bass slam the D40/Rs remain brilliantly agile.

Listen to Nick Cave's *Push the Sky Away* and it's the clever lyrics, subtle rhythms and beautiful melodies that grab you, rather than hi-fi considerations such as bass grip or spaciousness. If you want to analyse the recording it's easy enough, but the ProAc's suggest that the actual music is far more important. We like that.

As you might have guessed we're really taken with the Response D40/Rs. They do the hi-fi things really well but have the pleasing habit of getting out of the way of the music. With the ProAc's we invariably ended up thinking how much fun we were having listening, rather than how great the hi-fi was. Oddly enough, only great hi-fi can do that.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR As articulate and dynamic a floorstander as we've heard at this price level; superb build
AGAINST Need plenty of space and a first-rate system to really shine

VERDICT If you're after a top-class pair of floorstanders these are as musical as they come

TECH SPECS

Type Floorstander
Sensitivity 90dB/W/m
Impedance 4 ohms
Max power 250W
Biwireable Yes
Finishes 6
DIMENSIONS (hwd) 120 x 21 x 34cm