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Bowers & Wilkins CM1

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Gadget Guy Review

Reviewer: Thomas Bartlett

Do you occasionally sneak a glance at a high-end audiophile magazine from the United States or England? Read their wordy, but nevertheless interesting, subjective impressions of this or that piece of exotic high fidelity equipment?

They write of musical impressions other than frequency response or bass extension or controlled harmonic distortion. They write in a poetry of revelation: how this tweak or that speaker cable removes one more pane of grubby glass that has been interposed between you and the artistry, the actuality, of the real music.

But have you then sighed, and decided that you cannot devote your entire life, and financial future, to this pursuit?



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Gadget of the week

Well you don't need to. Instead, prepare for a compromise and consider the Bowers and Wilkins CM1 stereo loudspeakers. These are bookshelf-sized two-way loudspeakers. But it might be better to consider them the top portion of a world-class audiophile speaker system of which any music lover would be proud.

Each contains only a 130mm bass/midrange driver and a 25mm aluminium dome tweeter. So, to make the sound good B&W has limited their efficiency somewhat in order to allow them to deliver listenable bass.

Truth is, they sound essentially balanced, but it is clear that there is nothing truly deep there. But just listen. At first they sound like any old loudspeaker, except too quiet. I had plenty of power available, so I wound up the volume. And what was revealed was a tangible reality. I noticed this first with the first CD I happened to play: Nitty Gritty Dirt Band's 'Uncle Charlie & His Dog Teddy'. The male vocal... well, I could close my eyes and imagine a bearded rock-bluegrass 1970 singer there between the speakers, and it made perfect sense.

CD after CD, the result was the same. Forget your tweaks and your thousands of dollars of bits and pieces. Couple these speakers to half-decent electronics and you will get true high fidelity.