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# Outword

magazine

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# Does Size Really Matter?

## Rating the Outlaw Bookshelf Loudspeaker *by Ron Tackitt*

The other day I was reading an article from an interior designer about how to integrate electronic equipment into a room's design. As is typical of these diatribes, it went something like, "All electronics are gross and ugly and should be shoved in an armoire."

Speakers usually seem to take the brunt of this kind of abuse because, technically, they can't be totally out of sight and still be effective. This designer's advice? Buy the smallest speakers you can, they will be fine.

Being a gay man, and someone who watches a lot of HGTV, I can say that I appreciate a beautiful room as much as the next, but buying a sound system just for its ability to be invisible will usually give you something that sounds like the PA system at Home Depot. It doesn't need to be that way, but, alas, some compromise in the interior designer's plan is necessary.

I mention all this because there are some really amazing speakers out there that don't require custom made built-ins. Recently I got a chance to listen to the Outlaw Audio Bookshelf Loudspeaker, and have been particularly impressed with the sheer

quality of sound that comes from such a compact package.

The Outlaws are about the size of 10-15 typical magazines standing side by side. They are designed to be used on a shelf or tucked into a corner of a room, and while they will be visible, they are quite handsome. The review pair I had were finished in a hand-matched Cherry wood veneer with black metal grills that just snap into place on the front. The fit and finish was impeccable – not unlike a very expensive piece of furniture.

It should be known that Outlaw spent countless hours working on, and getting these speakers just right. They use some of the best components available, and if you really want to know what they are, check out their web site. They are happy to tell you the particulars.

However, after all my years of Hi-Fi experience, I usually boil speaker

choices down to three main factors; size, price and do YOU like the way they sound. This may sound simplistic, but there are just so many different ways to design a speaker. The only way to know what any speaker is like is to sit down and listen to it. So that's exactly what I did. I put them in my main system, the one I mostly watch movies and TV on, and since having these guys hooked up there, I have also been using the system more and more with music CDs.

Fresh out of the box, the Outlaws were fairly bright and sharp, and while this is very typical of new equipment, it's always a little off-putting at first. Fast forward to a week or so later, and that

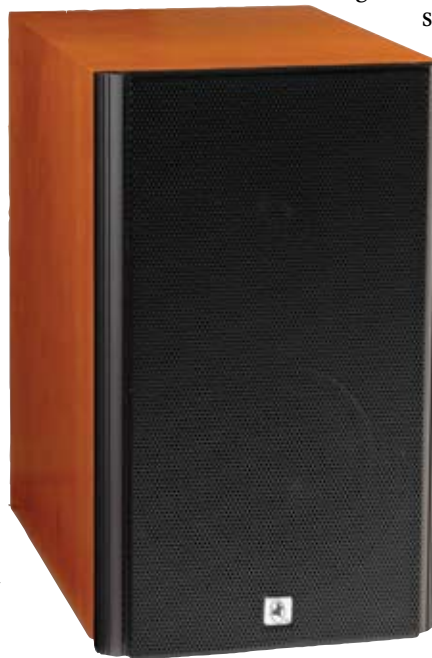
character was gone. In fact, the speakers were drawing very little attention to themselves at all, especially since they were tucked onto shelves under the TV set. Once I realized how transparent these guys had become, I figured it was time to sit down and really pay attention.

To say I am impressed with the Outlaws is an understatement. I even grabbed some other speakers I had lying around the house and swapped them back and forth for reference. The Outlaws were consistently better: cleaner details, smoother and better balanced midrange tones, tighter bass... the Outlaws could do little wrong. I realize these are small speakers, and there is a limit to how much

bass you can get out of them, but their overall presentation was impressive. When I used them for surround sound, I turned on my subwoofer so the system could handle explosions and the like. The Outlaws were just as well suited for this use - I only wish I had another pair to use for the rear surrounds. That would be a fun surround system.

The Outlaws are relatively small, exquisitely well made, should be able to meld into an interior's design, and they sound truly amazing. So how much are they going to set you back? The black versions are \$999 and the Cherry wood finish are \$1,099. This is not cheap by any means, but having spent some time with them, I can tell you they are, actually, a great value. I'm going to hate to see them go.

*Privately owned Outlaw Audio designs their own line of high-performance, high-value consumer electronics products and markets them exclusively via the Internet from their [www.outlawaudio.com](http://www.outlawaudio.com) web site. The recipient of numerous major awards and "Recommended Component" ratings from major publications, Outlaw's products are widely regarded by audiophiles around the world.*



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**CALIFORNIA STATE FAIR**  
AUG 17 - LABOR DAY

### Fun Never Grows Old at The California State Fair

By Poppy  
CALIFORNIA STATE FAIR  
Sacramento, CA -  
Why would I bring this up you may be asking yourself. Well the answer my friend is easy—the 2007 California State Fair. Don't miss this once a year chance to act like a kid again, over-indulging all your senses

For those of you familiar with the California State Fair - you're probably dying to get the line-up for the free concert series on the Golden1 Stage. Yep that's right, big names performing live on stage for you or you can reserve a Golden1 ticket to see a live performance of music legends. So onto the line-up: Opening Night Friday, August 17, is Tuba with Gold Circle reserved seat tickets for sale at \$45. Tuesday August 21 is Huey Lewis And The News, \$40 Gold Circle. Wednesday, August 22 is Daughtry. \$39 Gold Circle. Thursday, August 23 is...  
Bump's is a must see show for all Labor Day Monday...  
Lots. This year the California State Fair is proud to present a new...  
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