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## Review of Audio Craftsman's Kingston model Speakers

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[Audiocraftsmen.com](http://Audiocraftsmen.com)

Thom Pahmer, founder and CEO of the new and, I believe, the most recent Canadian company producing speakers, Audio Craftsmen, calls it kismet; an Arabic word for fate or destiny. I'll use Carl Jung's word, synchronicity; that is, the meaningful coincidence of two or more events where something other than the probability of chance is involved. I refer to my serendipitous encounter with Jay Iyagi's rather enthusiastic review of Audio Craftsmen's Victoria Bookshelf speakers on Jay's Youtube channel. He heard these impressive portals at the Axpona show in Chicago, April of this year. Jay was very enthusiastic and clearly impressed. What caught my attention was his aside that the producer of these speakers was Canadian and they were constructed in the GTA, southern Ontario. Well, well, well. Always excited to promote Canadian quality to our Southern friends and neighbours and, of course, to ourselves; I did a quick search, called Thom, told him I would be very interested in reviewing a floor-standing model, sent him a whack of reviews I had written and the rest is----well, kismet. And he just happens to live 20 minutes south of my residence, ensconced on a very comfortable, well treed urban street, that just happens to be 10 houses down from my step daughter's residence, the abode of two of our five grandchildren. Synchronicity, or what!

On review for today is the Kingston model floor standing speakers by AudioCraftsmen. They are a two-way ported bass reflex floor standing speaker with the following dimensions: general height 38.25", width 8", depth 12" and each speaker weighing 55 lbs. You have an option with the purchase of the Kingston model, for a modest cost of \$399.00 USD, to add EMS to your speakers. EMS is Audiocraftsmen's Enhanced Mass System, an upgrade that adds 55 lbs. to the weight of each speaker, bringing each speaker to 110 lbs. By adding mass the individual components sound more focused and more clear simply by way of the new heavily weighted frame, thereby reducing any vibratory incidentals to an absolute minimum. This is a penny wise addition to the purchase of the Kingston speakers, for anything one can do to add mass to a speaker will inevitably add exponentially greater stability and reduce vibratory detritus from your overall sound.

The signature split and angled cabinet design seen in the Kingston speakers brings a true singularity to the look of the Audiocraftsmen speaker, a design that I find stunningly appealing. If this design turns you on, as it does me, with the added details of Enhanced mass system, gold plated wire lugs, hand soldering, steel spike tip toes for added stability, solid hardwood feet, two internal cross brackets that create an extremely rigid cabinet, real wood veneer on all sides, oxygen free 99.99% pure copper wiring, computer assisted cabinet cutting, hand assembly and finishing, then I think you would agree with me that if high standard workmanship in the service of audio excellence and visual-design-chic are what you want, the Audiocraftsmen line of speakers should grab your attention and call for your consideration. If I may add one more salient point here: Thom ensures once you order your speaker at [www.audiocraftsmen.com](http://www.audiocraftsmen.com), and it arrives at your home, you have 30 days to become acquainted with your sound portal and decide whether you want to keep it. Incredibly fair and, I might add, incredibly intelligent. Because it shows the trust and confidence Thom has in his design, his craftsmanship and his speakers. Throw in a warranty of five years for parts and you have, in my opinion, a winning Hifi purchase.

In addition to all of this, the Audiocraftsmen line of speakers utilize the best of European/Scandinavian-made tweeters and woofers, along with industry recognized European/French crossover components. The tweeter is the Seas Excel "CRESCENDO", an Ultra High End 29mm soft dome tweeter with a HEXADYM magnet system. Seas tweeters are recognized as excellent tweeters, often found in much more expensive systems. The HEXADYM magnet system is based on 6 radially magnetized NdFeB magnet blocks provide efficient ventilation and damping of cavities behind the dome, surround and voice coil. All first class material to ensure an heirloom quality make of speaker.

The woofer is also a Seas product, a 6 ½ inch, or 18 cm, 39mm voice coil with a unique Nextel coating, ensuring smooth frequency response and low distortion. In addition, there are two, independently mounted, hand built crossovers made with French components. The low pass network is a 3rd order design. The high pass network employs a conventional 2nd order filter with an L-pad network. The L-pad Attenuator is a simple resistive voltage divider network which can be used as a fixed passive attenuator to reduce the amplitude of a signal. The crossover frequency is 2.2KHz and we should add, finally, the speakers have a 88dB sensitivity, a frequency range of 30 to 25,000Hz; an impedance of 8 ohm, and it is recommended that one uses amplifiers with an output of 25 Watts to 125 Watts.

I begin my listening sessions with Hans Zimmer's *Interstellar* film score played from Apple music streaming service on my MacBook Pro, USB'd to the Mytec New Manhattan 11 DAC through to the Tektron TK-2 211-1 Tube amplifier, an italiano stallion designed and built in Sicily, and an absolute stunner of a tube amp, all seamlessly connected as if mirroring the great quantum field itself, with Rob Fitz's superb-energy corridors of supreme efficiency, his AudioCables. It must be stated just before we begin our sound analysis that the Tektron TK-2 211-1 Tube Amplifier I am using for this review was lent to me by a wonderful and kind gentleman, Mr. Don Corby, owner and operator of Corby's Audio, North American distributor for Tektron and all-round great gentleman. Please check out Don's website and be sure to call and inquire into the many high-end turntables, amplifiers and speakers Don sells. Here is his website and contact number: [www.corbysaudio.com](http://www.corbysaudio.com), 1-905-689-1976.

Zimmer's film score *Interstellar* is conceived with full sampled orchestral sounds, various environmental sounds with an innovative layering of digitally sampled musique concret sounds, in addition to high levels of studio created compression. The crescendos are hyper active and beyond what a normal orchestra would consider musical. However, tied to the visual image in the film itself, the contrasts between the sparse to dense texture and from the pianissimo to the fortes is emphatically dramatic. The music spans the range of minimalist to extremely dense textures with a surprising and prominent use of a full cathedral pipe organ to fulfill these dense textured moments. It is an impressive film score, with much to admire. This type of film music requires a speaker that can handle layers upon layers of sound, much of it nuanced and coming from deep within the dense texture of the music with as much clarity as possible.

Well, let's look at "Mountain", one section of the film score that begins with an indefinite pitched repeating sound; it is downright riveting because it exists in a soundscape of almost total silence. The transient of this indefinite pitched sound is reproduced perfectly by the Kingstons, with no time lag and rendered with an accurate short explosion of sound energy. This transient is then informed further by more layers of sound until the double forte section returns with a descending eighth-note electronic bass pattern. Every step in Zimmer's orchestration further reveals the Kingston's ability to manifest clarity. Even at the height of this voluminous layering of sounds, one can discern the different attributes of this moment and hear an electronic descending bass pattern. Sandy Gross, the inventor of the Polk Model 10 speaker---certainly one of the first American mass produced speakers to equal some of the best British made speakers of the late 70s' and early 80s' said---and I paraphrase, 'What you hear is not the air pressure variation itself but what has drawn your attention in the streams of superimposed air pressure variations at your eardrums.' We hear what we bring our intention and attention to hear. Everything after that is shifting our attention to focus on different layers of the recorded sound. What we call 'the deep dive.' Even at some high volumes, the Kingstons kept their cool and delivered a balanced and expansive sound with objective clarity! And coming from this film score, that is saying something!

Gorecki's *Symphony No. 3*, or the "Symphony of Sorrows," offers up probably one of the best classical orchestral examples of how your speakers will handle an orchestral opening of double-basses beginning a 24 bar Aeolian mode, 2 part canon, beginning on a low E. I've heard this rendered as unsatisfying as a badly made cappuccino---mud! Decca's recording of conductor Kasamierz Kord with the Warsaw Symphony Orchestra offers an excellent performance and with great anticipation I started the opening fugue through my Apple streaming service. Well, how did the Kingstons do? Perhaps not as crisp and dry as a good Chablis, but with enough clarity and definition to put this rendering ahead of many, many speakers. I have heard the *Symphony of Sorrows'* opening through one well known British made bookshelf speaker that obfuscated and blurred the pitches of this opening---not so with the Kingston speakers. As Gorecki layers his opening double bass canon with different parts of the string orchestra, one can start to observe the imaging of these speakers. 2 points of sound spill out into the space in front of you to create an expansive audio image that faithfully reproduces the reality of a live symphony orchestra.

Third example is Sibelius' *Symphony no. 2* and I've picked the quintessential French conductor, Paul Paray, with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra on Mercury vinyl. No need to school this reading audience on the audio brilliance of the Mercury recordings of the 50s' and 60s'. The sound is legend and the efforts made to record the Detroit symphony is a legend in and of itself. The forwardness of the microphones in the Mercury recordings create a massive soundstage, but with absolute balance and clarity of the individual instruments and instrument sections of the orchestra. Sit back and marvel at the essence of the French orchestral sound: clear orchestral textures,



the firm, muscular rhythmic articulations and the lively solo playing. All of these audible features of the French school are faithfully and energetically reproduced by the Kingston speakers. The expansive soundscape that fills in time and space between right and left speaker, brings the orchestra, the full vibrant colours and tone of the orchestra, into my man-cave and I am happy.

Last but not least is Grechaninov's Ukranian/Russian Eastern Orthodox music for Passion week on Chandos CD, performed by the Phoenix Bach Chorale and the the Kansas City Chorale under the direction of Charles Bruffy. Unfortunately, I am running out of my allotted word space, so let me be brief. Charles Bruffy and his two choirs are the exemplars now of excellence in American choral singing. Period. Recorded in Kansas City's Cathedral of St. Peter the Apostle, and recorded brilliantly, the Kingstons mirror the definable contours of Grechaninov's expressive choral music, bringing us as faithfully as one can imagine into the authentic resonance of this acoustically wondrous Cathedral. This is, for me, a religious experience. The technical efficiency of these speakers gives me a faithful reproduction of a fantastic choral sound in a resonant Cathedral that offers vertical space galore and depth of imaging from behind the speakers. And that low C below the Bass clef from these extraordinary Bases at the end of the first Amen is unquestionably audible.

I deeply enjoyed my time with Audiocraftsmen's Kingston floor standing speakers and I highly recommend these speakers to you, dear reader. Please check out Thom's website at: [www.audiocraftsmen.com](http://www.audiocraftsmen.com). I look forward to reviewing his next larger model, the Halifax in the not to distant future.

