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What You Need to Know...



Atlantic Technology System 6200
Test Report Inside



If there's one ever-green audiophile fantasy, it's the perfect speaker. I know lots of guys who obsess about this sort of thing, but I always remind them that, even if they had a home theater packed with perfect beauties, they still wouldn't attain audio nirvana. The perfect speakers would be confronted by the realities of a very imperfect room—its standing waves, peaks, dips, image-smearing reflections, and reverberations would conspire to muck up the sound.

I'm amazed that, despite all of the advances in speaker design, relatively little has been done to negate the vagaries of the

Tune Your Room

speaker/room interface. Yeah, digital-room-correction schemes promise a lot, but to my ears the “cure” always sounds overly processed, which is worse than the disease. **The smart folks at Atlantic Technology have devised a more down-to-earth solution dubbed Custom Optimized Room Enhanced technology.**

Atlantic currently offers two room-tuning ensembles: the flagship System 8200 and the considerably

Atlantic Technology's

new speaker system will do just that.

by Steve Guttenberg





HIGH-PERFORMANCE THEATER

Atlantic Technology System 6200 Speaker System

more-affordable package that I'm reviewing here, the System 6200 (\$8,000 to \$10,800).

Atlantic Tech eschewed most of the gaudier high-end filigrees; the System 6200 doesn't rely on

cutting-edge speaker drivers, uber digital processing modes, or exotic cabinet materials.

Instead, the engineers developed a modular system that's flexible enough to quell a range

of typical acoustic anomalies. I'll soon explain how they accomplished that, but let's first take a look at the basic system.

Normally, the 6200 LR two-way monitor resides atop the 6200 Pedestal Subwoofer (aka the PedWoofers). Together they

form a 52-inch-tall tower of power. Alternatively, you could combine the satellites with wooferless pedestals and stash the PedWoofers out of sight in the corners of your theater. The 6200 LR houses a pair of 6.5-inch, graphite-loaded homopolymer woofers that

flanks a 1-inch silk dome tweeter in a D'Appolito array.

The 6200 C center speaker sits on an adjustable base and

uses a driver complement that's identical to that of the 6200 LR.

The 6200 SR surround sports a pair of 5.5-inch woofers and the same 1-inch tweeter. When you view it from above, the

switchable di-/bipole surround speaker resembles the outer perimeter of the Superman logo. It's available in a matte white or black finish, and its sturdy keyhole brackets facilitate wall-mounting.

All of the speakers are sealed, acoustic-suspension designs that feature heavy-grade binding posts. They are finished in a rather austere black satin that

only a custom installer could love (as it's ideal for situations where the speakers will be concealed). Atlantic Tech expects that most buyers will spiff up their 6200 speakers with the beautifully finished Accent Panel kits, available in natural maple, cherry, Asian mahogany, gloss

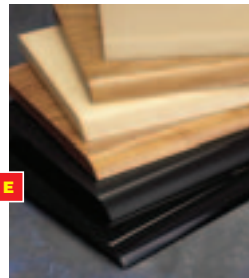
black, or unfinished MDF. In any case, the gracefully curved, magnetically attached, perforated metal grilles look gorgeous.

Great, but what about the room-tuning stuff? The 6200 LR and 6200 C offer three tweaking options on their back panel. The top control is labeled HF energy and lets

you choose between flat, rolled-off high frequencies to tame a bright/reverberant room and a slightly raised tweeter level that's ideal for a room with lots of stuffed furniture. The middle switch, dubbed location, toggles between normal and behind-screen settings—the latter choice raises the upper-midrange and lower-treble frequencies, which is particularly useful when the speaker is positioned behind a perforated projection screen or curtains. The lower control, called boundary compensation, toggles between on and THX/normal settings; switch it on to reduce the midbass coloration caused by the speaker's close proximity to a TV screen or wall.

The PedWoofers is sold in mirror-imaged pairs. You can set their 10-inch carbon fiber polymer woofers facing in toward each other or facing out into the room. These beasts rest on sturdy metal bars that are outfitted with massive, adjustable cone feet. The

PedWoofers is a purely passive speaker: Its associated electronics come in the form of the 19-inch-wide,



E

HIGHLIGHTS

- Highly tweakable sound
- High-definition/rock-the-house bass response
- Remote subwoofer control—that's very cool!

A. The 6200 SR can perform as a bipole or dipole speaker.

B. Although it's designed to sit atop the PedWoofers to form a tower speaker, the 6200 LR can function as a two-way bookshelf speaker.

C. The PedWoofers is a passive sub with a 10-inch woofer.

D. The shielded 6200 C center channel uses the same driver array as the 6200 LR.

E. Custom accent panels in a variety of finishes make it easy to match the System 6200 with your décor.



A



B

C



D





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F. The PedWoofers get their juice from the separate SA 6200 amplifier, which also houses the sub's parametric controls.

G. The SA 6200's back panel features speaker outputs, low-level jacks, and IR control functions.

rack-mountable SA 6200 amplifier (which features 350 mono watts that drive both PedWoofers in your 6200 system). The amp also houses the system's parametric bass-tailoring functions: the frequency control, 25 to 75 hertz; the width function, which controls the selected EQ range over 0.2 to 1.5 octaves; and the attenuation setting, which ranges from 0 decibels down to -20 dB. I just wish Atlantic Tech had put these controls behind a flip-down cover. Exposed as they are, it's too easy

to accidentally disturb the settings. The company includes a special Atlantic Tech/Sencore test and training CD-ROM that guides you through the setup process. Oh, before I forget to mention it, the SA 6200 comes with a nifty little remote control that not only allows on-the-fly subwoofer-level adjustment, but you can confirm the sub-level setting on the amp's display. The remote also offers access to four EQ presets that you can use to heighten your enjoyment of DVDs and CDs.

SA 6200's parametric EQ. After I disregarded Atlantic Tech's awkwardly worded instructions, I found the process to be straightforward. I played a sweep tone from 100 Hz down to 20 Hz and watched my RadioShack SPL meter's needle slam into the end

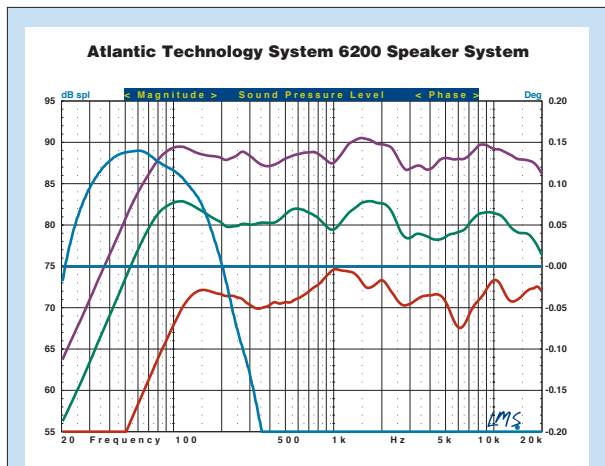


The fifth button (called Ref) resets the EQ to flat. You can also mute the sub via the remote. The complete System 6200 was designed, engineered, and hand-assembled at the company's Norwood, Massachusetts, facility.

I don't usually mention speaker break-in in my reviews, but this time I will because the System 6200's maturation process was anything but subtle. The fresh-out-of-the-box sound was awfully boxy, so I let the speakers play for a few days and was startled by their transformation. It was a huge difference, as they sounded decidedly more open. Even after I fiddled with the room-tweaking controls, however, the soundstage was still recessed. Most recordings imaged behind the plane of the front three speakers. I performed some cable-swapping tests and wound up using my trusty Monster Cable M1.4S Biwires, which nudged the soundstage forward by just the right amount.

My review system has recently evolved a bit: I'm now using a Marantz DV8400 DVD player, a Sunfire Theater Grand III pre/pro, and the amazing Ayre V-6x power amp. With the initial setup out of the way, I tackled fine-tuning the

stop in the 70- to 80-Hz range. Yes, there were other spikes in the 50s and 30s, but the 70-Hz range registered the tallest peaks, so I set the SA 6200's frequency control at 75, the width control down around eight o'clock (quite a narrow octave range), and the attenuation at nine o'clock. When I measured again, all of the peaks were still present, but they were lower in level. When I listened to bass-heavy music, it was a shade too anorexic. I spent the next hour fiddling with the controls, listening and tweaking and listening again before arriving at an acceptable compromise between accurate and satisfyingly full bass response. At the end of the day, the PedWoofers were essentially flat to the mid 20s in my room. I continued the dialing-in process with more CDs and DVDs over the next few days, and I ultimately achieved better, more-seamless integration than any sub/sat combination I've ever used. If you're into tweaking, you'll enjoy the procedure; if not, enlist



HT Labs Measures: Atlantic Technology System 6200 Speaker System

This graph shows the quasi-anechoic (employing close-miking of all woofers) frequency response of the 6200 LR (purple trace), 6200 PedWoofer subwoofer (blue trace), 6200 C center channel (green trace), and 6200 SR surround (red trace). All passive loudspeakers were measured at a distance of 1 meter with a 2.83-volt input and scaled for display purposes.

The 6200 LR's listening-window response (a five-point average of axial and +/-15-degree horizontal and vertical responses) measures +1.44/-2.42 decibels from 200 hertz to 10 kilohertz. The -3dB point is at 70 Hz, and the -6dB point is at 57 Hz. Impedance reaches a minimum of 4.16 ohms at 162 Hz and a phase angle of -42.59 degrees at 1.8 kHz. Sensitivity averages 89 dB from 500 Hz to 2 kHz.

The 6200 C's listening-window response measures +1.38/-3.28 dB from 200 Hz to 10 kHz. An average of axial and +/-15-degree horizontal responses measures +1.70/-2.92 dB from 200 Hz to 10 kHz. The -3dB point is at 65 Hz, and the -6dB point is at 55 Hz. Impedance reaches a minimum of 4.06 ohms at 152 Hz and a phase angle of -42.41 degrees at 1.8 kHz. Sensitivity averages 89.5 dB from 500 Hz to 2 kHz.

The 6200 SR's three-face averaged response measures +1.66/-5.43 dB from 200 Hz to 10 kHz. The -3dB point is at 113 Hz, and the -6dB point is at 95 Hz. Impedance reaches a minimum of 3.27 ohms at 365 Hz and a phase angle of -70.64 degrees at 129 Hz. Sensitivity averages 87 dB from 500 Hz to 2 kHz.

The 6200 PedWoofer's close-miked response, normalized to the average level from 40 to 80 Hz, indicates that the lower -3dB point is at 33 Hz and the -6dB point is at 27 Hz. The upper -3dB point is at 113 Hz with the low-pass control set to maximum.—MJP



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a technically inclined friend or, better yet, hire a pro.

When I listened to pianist Wayne Horvitz's *Sweeter Than the Day* SACD, I was struck by the System 6200's rhythmic, toe-tapping engagement. Horvitz's beboppin' zigs and zags somehow seamlessly meshed with Timothy Young's sleek electric guitar. Man, the System 6200's nimble sound never failed to take me further into the music. The speakers' unerring precision was even more evident on bassist Charlie Haden and pianist Hank Jones' gospel-infused *Steal Away* CD. Lesser speakers never fully decipher the two men's tightly coupled pacing, and Haden's stand-up bass too often veers over to roly-poly fat. Not this time. I could practically see the two men egging each other on.

If you get a chance to demo a dialed-in System 6200, leave time to check out Holly Cole's *Temptation* CD. Trust me, the PedWoofers' startlingly visceral and oh-so-tuneful bass will curl your toes! Beck's mournful *Sea Change* SACD sounded like a mellifluous sonic orb that inhabited every corner of my listening room.

The psychedelic strings swooping through "Lonesome Tears" raised goose bumps, and the taut percussion on "Lost Cause" was flawlessly balanced.

I did notice one odd quirk during my quieter late-night listening sessions: The SA 6200 amp would audibly click off when the signal dropped below its threshold for more than a few minutes and then click back on at the first sign of bass. I wasn't aware of the bass' comings and goings, but the clicks were mildly distracting.

Big, special-effects-driven DVDs kicked butt through the System 6200. Its freewheelin' dynamics and low-end fortitude proved that the ensemble was no slouch in the home theater mojo department. I want to mention *Igby Goes Down*, an awfully strange little movie with an extremely natural soundtrack. I was so swept away by this well-crafted film that I never stopped to think about

the sound. Being the analytical reviewer that I am, that's a big compliment. After I watched the film the first time, I jumped back to marvel at the score's deft support

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|---|-----------------|
| 6200 LR Speaker | \$2,200/pair |
| 6200 C Center-Channel Speaker | \$1,200 |
| 6200 SR Surround Speaker | \$1,400/pair |
| 6200 PedWoofers System (with SA 6200 Amplifier) | \$3,200 |
| Accent Panel Kit | \$1,225-\$2,800 |

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of the film's emotional climax. The towering 6200 towers disappeared like minimonitors.

I thoroughly enjoyed my time with the System 6200, coming away equally impressed with its state-of-the-art bass and room-tuning abilities. The system's exemplary balance and poise under pressure won my heart. Bravo! 🎧

