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# Monster® M•Design Eleganza Series

Combining Hi-Fi Audio With  
Hi-Fi Furniture

Danny Richelieu

## A Monster In The Industry

At this point in the game, if you have not heard of Monster®, you have probably been living in a cave, but here comes the regulatory company profile none-the-less.

The 27-year old company based in Brisbane, California (about 10 miles south of San Francisco on the peninsula) was started by The Head Monster, Noel Lee, in the garage of his flat in north-west San Francisco, with his crazy idea that high quality cables with specially designed windings could make a loudspeaker sound better. Built on The Head Monster's legendary work ethic and overactive imagination (both in design and marketing), Monster now holds over 200 patents incorporated into over 4,000 products, ranging from Monster Cables® to Monster Power® amplifiers and power conditioners to Monster Mints™. Their newest venture into the home theatre arena, M•Design™, is a full line of loudspeakers and furniture designed to look as good as it sounds, and sound as good as it looks.

Monster has always been known for their ingenious marketing techniques, and before the 2004 NFL® season, they took it a step further, buying the naming rights to the famed Candlestick Park in San Francisco, California, naming it Monster Park—not bad for a privately owned company. “Having started a business here, I couldn't even imagine in my wildest dreams that this could have happened,” said Noel Lee. And while sponsoring a professional football team's stadium might seem like a big step into the mainstream, one which is generally filled by the large worldwide corporations, it is really a testament to Noel's “out of the box” thinking when it comes to both marketing and design.

For this review, Monster kindly flew me in to Brisbane, where I listened to the full suite of M•Design products, and was able to listen to the StreamLine™ loudspeakers teamed with the matching Eleganza™ line of furniture. The system I listened to included two Eleganza StreamLine Tower 8400's, two StreamLine Tower 7200's, an Eleganza StreamLine Center Channel 3600, and two Eleganza Godfather™ 1500 subwoofers.

## Beauty To The Eyes

Half of M•Design's design philosophy revolves around the loudspeaker's looks, and these beautiful towers definitely hold up their end of the equation. With an unconventional asymmetric footprint, the Eleganza StreamLine 8400 loudspeakers look good from any angle. The teardrop shape involves both alu-



## SPECIFICATIONS

### Eleganza™ StreamLine™ Tower 8400

Frequency Response: 62 Hz - 20 kHz, ±3 dB  
Sensitivity: 82 dB/W/m  
Drivers: 0.75-inch Moccioso™ silk dome tweeter (1); 1.5-inch Bambina™ inverted titanium dome midrange (40); 3.5-inch Bambino™ inverted aluminum dome bass (15)

Dimensions (WHD In Inches): 8 x 84 x 5  
Weight (In Pounds): 131  
Price: \$6,999.95 per pair

### Eleganza StreamLine Center Channel 3600

Frequency Response: 90 Hz - 20 kHz, ±3 dB  
Sensitivity: 81 dB/W/m  
Drivers: 0.75-inch Moccioso silk dome tweeter (1); 1.5-inch Bambina inverted titanium dome midrange (8); 3.5-inch Bambino inverted aluminum dome bass (4)

Dimensions (WHD In Inches): 36 x 8 x 8  
Weight (In Pounds): 24  
Price: \$1,799.95

### Eleganza StreamLine Bass Module 1000

Frequency Response: 33 Hz - 200 Hz, ±3 dB  
Amplifier: 250-watt on-board  
Driver: 10-inch Basso™ high-excursion, cast-aluminum

Dimensions (WHD In Inches): 12 x 20 x 19  
Weight (In Pounds): 46  
Price: \$2,499.95 per pair

### Eleganza Godfather™ 1500

Frequency Response: 18 Hz - 200 Hz, ±3 dB  
Amplifier: 1000-watt on-board  
Driver: 15-inch Basso high-excursion, cast-aluminum

Dimensions (WHD In Inches): 31 x 23 x 31  
Weight (In Pounds): 222  
Price: \$4,999.95

### Manufactured In The United States By:

Monster Cable Products  
455 Valley Drive  
Brisbane, CA 94005  
Tel: 866 563 6388  
www.mdesignlife.com

“The 8400's delivered smooth mids  
with good depth and detail...”

minum and an exotic hardwood veneer to deliver its timeless Italian-styled design that will match most any room's décor.

The Head Monster believes that if your wife doesn't like the way your loudspeakers look, you will have limited success getting a system into your house. That is the reason why an incredible amount of attention has been paid toward the way the loudspeaker system looks, as well as functions.

Two panels house the 56 individual drivers, with the fifteen 3.5-inch woofers covered by a black, acoustically transparent cloth grille, and the forty 1.5-inch "extended range" drivers and 0.75-inch tweeter covered by a perforated aluminum grille that is connected using a series of magnets. Both grilles match the sleek design well, especially when the optional Bass Module 1000 is attached.

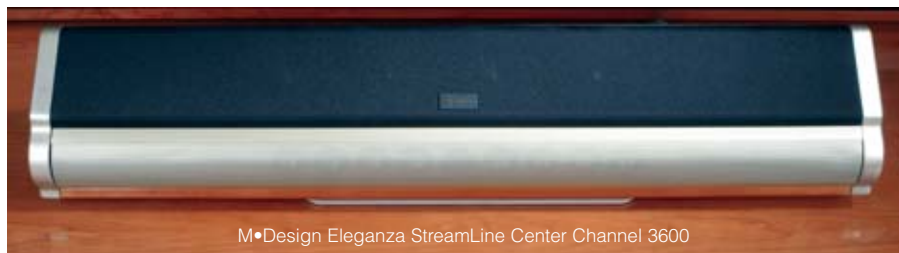
Running along the side of each of the Eleganza StreamLine Towers is a BlueMood™ lighting strip, which provides a subtle blue glow behind the towers and looks spectacular in a dark or dimly lit room.

The 70-pound swivel base that is included with the StreamLine Tower loudspeakers serves two functions: one, obviously, to keep the towers upright while maintaining their exact location in the room; and two, to accurately maintain proper toe-in angles to the "sweet-spot" listening position. Each base uses a vernier scale in one-degree tick marks for determining the correct loudspeaker placement at each position in the room.

The stylish Bass Module 1000 connects to the base of the StreamLine Tower in a very complimentary fashion, matching the Tower's teardrop lines in a high-gloss piano black that accents and reinforces the asymmetrical Italian styling.

A matching center channel loudspeaker is also available, named the Eleganza StreamLine Center Channel 3600. Designed to match both tonally and aesthetically to their big brothers, the Center Channel 3600 fits the entire Eleganza series nicely. Employing the same asymmetrical cross-section, hardwood veneer, aluminum accents, and both aluminum and cloth grilles, it certainly matches in its design. The included aluminum tabletop pedestal mount allows for a full range of vertical and angular adjustment to better match your sweet-spot listening position.

The Eleganza Godfather 1500 subwoofer is designed to be displayed in your room, not placed in an out-of-the-way location. The subwoofer's cabinet is built like a high quality piece of furniture, with real cherrywood veneer, aluminum grille, and trim. Black painted bezels make them a perfect match to the Tower and Center Channel loudspeakers. Built with rigidity in



M•Design Eleganza StreamLine Center Channel 3600

mind, resonances are kept to a minimum, which makes it the prototypical double threat—it can be used both as a corner table and as a high quality subwoofer.

If the seven-foot tall towers are a little large for your room, two other models are available, with the same tonal balance as the 8400. The six-foot 7200 and five-foot 6000 have slightly less bass extension with the same dispersion characteristics, but with less drivers, they will not safely reach the same SPL levels as the 8400.

The Eleganza line also includes a broad assortment of furniture to compliment the StreamLine Towers, including the Divano Action Couch™, the Cappuccino™ Home Theater Component Center™, and the Macchiato Home Theater Component Tower™, as well as other loudspeaker options, such as the Bella 1200 subwoofer, the Component Center Subwoofer 1000, and the Flat Screen InvisiSound® Frame Sound System. For more detailed descriptions of each of these products, visit M•Design's Web site: <http://www.mdesignlife.com>.

## Beauty To The Ears

The Eleganza StreamLine Tower 8400 loudspeakers utilize forty 1.5-inch Bambina™ Extended Range Transducers, fifteen 3.5-inch Bambino™ Woofers, and one 0.75-inch Moccioso™ Super Tweeter to deliver sound.

The specially designed inverted titanium dome Bambina Extended Range drivers are what makes the StreamLine Towers possible, with their rated frequency range from 150 Hz all the way up to 20 kHz at ±3 dB. They are positioned as a vertical line source array on the same bezel as the Moccioso Super Tweeter to deliver a "wall of sound," with a consistent sonic signature, regardless of your vertical listening position.

The Bambina's large excursion (about ten times that of similarly sized drivers; delivered using a patented radial magnet design) provides the necessary extended low frequency capabilities, and allows for higher levels of output and lower intrinsic distortion. Using 40 of these drivers in an array brings the added benefit of much lower distortion and greater dynamic range by sharing the load across each driver. The

small drivers also bring the dispersion transition point up to a relatively high frequency (above 5 kHz), which makes the radiation mostly omnidirectional for the driver through the audio range.

Using 40 Bambina drivers provides (roughly) the same surface area as a single 9.5-inch midrange driver [ $\sqrt{40 \times (1.5)^2}$ ], which would be physically impossible to make with an omnidirectional response up to 20 kHz.

The Head Monster, Noel Lee, loves the sound of a big array, which can provide high SPLs with less harshness and distortion, with the same response no matter what vertical level you are listening at. Combined with the Bambina technology, Monster is attempting to create an open, uncompressed top end, even when driven past reference levels.

The StreamLine Tower 8400's are rated to a frequency response from 62 Hz to 20 kHz at ±3 dB. They are fairly insensitive, rated at 82 dB/W/m and have an average input impedance of 4 Ohms.

The Bambino Woofer uses an inverted dome aluminum diaphragm, with a high-excursion rubber surround, long-throw spider, and low-mass edge wound voice coil. The Moccioso Super Tweeter uses a silk dome diaphragm, neodymium magnet, ultra-light copper-clad aluminum edge wound voice coil, and uses ferrofluid cooling technology.

The Bambina Extended Range array on the StreamLine Tower 8400 loudspeaker is specially designed to combat phasing problems that can occur when using multiple drivers as a line array. They are positioned asymmetrically, with 18 drivers above the tweeter and 22 below, which helps maintain the proper ear level for the tweeter with respect to the listening position. Internal circuitry has been designed for the StreamLine loudspeakers to feed each individual driver a slightly varied signal to combat the phase problems that can be associated with line source loudspeakers.

Because the Bass Module 1000 also runs as a point source, adjusting the crossover point and gain is critical for maintaining seamless integration with the StreamLine Towers, and will be different



M•Design Eleganza StreamLine Tower 8400's

depending on how far away from the loudspeaker you are sitting.

Each driver is internally wired with Monster Cable, and the rear panel includes four 24-karat gold-contact binding posts with jumper straps for single wire or bi-wire setups.

The StreamLine Bass Module 1000 provides a 10-inch Basso™ woofer and 250-watt internal amplifier to extend the frequency range of the StreamLine Tower down to 33 Hz (at  $\pm 3$  dB), and includes controls for Gain, Crossover point (continuously adjustable from 30 Hz to 200 Hz), and phase, and includes an amplifier on/off/auto mode switch. Inputs and outputs include a mono line-level input and output for LFE channel daisy-chaining, as well as speaker-level inputs and outputs for sending the high pass, crossed over signal to the StreamLine Towers.

The StreamLine Center Channel 3600 uses a similar combination of drivers as the StreamLine Towers, with eight 1.5-inch Bambina Extended Range drivers, four 3.5-inch Bambino Woofers, and a single 0.75-inch Moccioso Super Tweeter. Because the center channel is placed horizontally, the Extended Range drivers are placed symmetrically around the Super Tweeter, with the woofers positioned above this horizontal array.

Extended bass is delivered through the Godfather 1500 High Performance Subwoofer, which uses an ultra-rigid aluminum cone 15-inch Basso driver with high-excursion rubber surround for increased range of motion. A Finite Element Analysis (FEA) optimized steel magnet is used, which provides a stronger magnetic field in

a lighter, more efficient design. The edge-wound aluminum voice coil is designed to improve power handling and overall transient response, while taking up less space. The Godfather uses a ported cabinet design, and comes in both left and right corner versions for symmetrical room placement. The back panel holds the phase and amplifier mode controls, as well as the speaker-level and line-level inputs. Line-level outputs are also included for daisy-chaining multiple Godfather subwoofers.

Having played the drums in a rock band for many years, the Head Monster wanted to design the "Godfather" of all subwoofers, without using any servo controls. Engineers at Monster held on to the idea that a subwoofer using a feedback circuit designed to correct for positioning errors would be, in itself, flawed, because the error has to occur before the correction can be made, or in other words, after the sound is already in the room.

The Godfather's 15-inch woofer with three-inch excursion uses the same patented radial magnet design as the Bambina and Bambino drivers, designed to help provide tighter bass without distortion, moving massive amounts of air without the use of feedback systems. The internal 1000-watt RMS class H ProSound amplifier is designed to provide enough horsepower to run the Godfather without distortion at extreme SPL levels.

## The Line Source

Line source array loudspeakers can be a wonderful solution, if done right, for delivering high SPL levels with constant frequency response over large areas, perfect for large rooms, or spaces where a dedicated "sweet spot" may not be acceptable. Because a line source loudspeaker propagates sound in a (near) cylindrical pattern, it does not follow the inverse square law for loss of SPL as distance doubles. Instead, it basically follows a -3 dB drop off (instead of the -6 dB drop off of a point source) as the distance from the loudspeaker doubles, which means each driver works less hard to load the same room.

Combined with the fact that there are 40 drivers working in accord, the -3 dB attenuation means the StreamLine Towers will provide more SPLs with less driver strain—minimizing distortion and maximizing efficiency.

The difference in attenuation can be a problem when looking at a loudspeaker that uses both line and point source driver configurations, such as the StreamLine Towers. While the brunt of the frequency range is delivered through a line array, the Moccioso Super Tweeter is still a point source, which

means frequencies delivered from it will follow the -6 dB attenuation curve. This means that information above the 15 kHz crossover between the Extended Range and Super Tweeter drivers could be noticeably attenuated if the same level signal is given to each.

Another benefit of a good line source design is the ability to negate some of the interaction a room has with the listener. Because of the -3 dB attenuation, first order reflections in the room can be more difficult for humans to recognize, and the cylindrical directivity makes it easier to direct sound, while minimizing the coloration often imparted on the sonic character by ceiling and floor reflections. In the room I used for this review [see diagram] (making big assumptions about the reflectivity of walls and atmospheric conditions), first order reflections will have around a 2.6 dB attenuation with a line source, while a point source would be around 5.1 dB. The average human can detect a difference between two signals if their levels deviate by 3 dB, so the varied sound levels from a point source would be more noticeable over that of a line source loudspeaker.

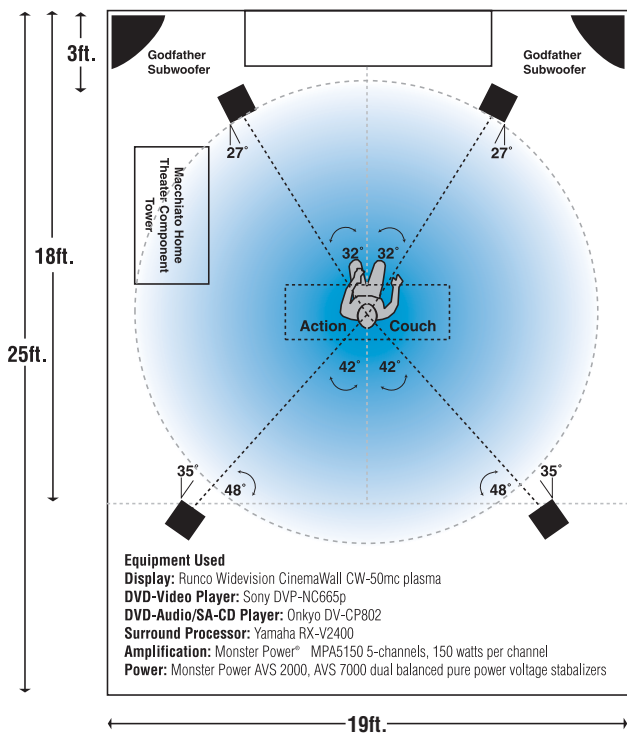
Another problem with this hybrid approach is the differences in efficiencies between the Extended Range array and the Super Tweeter. Because it takes less work to drive the 40 Extended Range drivers to get them to output high SPLs, it can be difficult for the Super Tweeter to keep up, which can result in a blown driver if the proper care is not taken when listening.

## So, How Does It Sound?

For initial setup, I listened to a few stereo recordings to get the proper physical placement for accurate center phantom imaging while maintaining a broad stereo field. I found these loudspeakers had to be toed-in to effectively recreate the stereo field, and each of the angles and distances used can be seen on the room diagram included in this review.

After setup, I moved on to multichannel music, using Steely Dan's *Gaucho* from DTS Entertainment, The Eagles' *Hotel California* from Warner Music, Norah Jones' *Come Away With Me* from Sony Music, and Big Phat Band's *XXL* from 5.1 Entertainment.

One common theme I found throughout my listening was that the 8400s delivered smooth mids with good depth and detail and a basking warmth that often made for a pleasant experience. The StreamLine Tower 8400's provide very good center "channel" phantom imaging when properly set up, and there really is not much flexibility in this



will need to be crossed over to your external subwoofers to feel the entire experience. Attaching the StreamLine Bass Module 1000's does wonders to the low end, with a good tonal balance between it and the 8400's when the crossover point is set to the 60 to 65 Hz range.

Norah Jones was represented well with this system, although the fine raspy detail in her vocals did seem to be softened slightly. The Godfather 1500 subwoofer proves to be a good match to the StreamLine Tower 8400's, but their levels may need to be toned down, as they can really pack a punch delivering intense SPL levels.

Both the StreamLine Tower 8400's and the Godfather 1500's can play really, really loud without

showing any signs of strain, a testament to both the line source array and ported subwoofer cabinetry. Pushing the volume well beyond reference level (up to the point of becoming uncomfortable), I could not detect any driver breakup distortion in the sonic character.

For movies, I went to my staples of *Ghost In The Shell 2: Innocence* from DreamWorks, *Master And Commander: The Far Side Of The World* from 20th Century Fox, Disney's *The Incredibles*, and *House Of Flying Daggers* from Sony Pictures.

Again, I could immediately hear the depth and detail around the entire 360-degree soundfield, with good timbre balance between each loudspeaker and impressive imaging around the room.

The StreamLine Tower 8400's and 7200's (which were used as the surround channels) matched surprisingly well, with a timbre balance that often had me glancing to my sides as panned effects would travel from the front to the rear of the soundfield. Phantom center surround imaging was also achieved with great detail, which created a fantastic surroundfield for localized phantom effects in each of the movies I listened to. Also, the extreme low end was represented well by the Godfather subwoofers.

Tonally, the Center Channel 3600 is a formidable match to the StreamLine Towers, creating a seamless front three-screen-channel stage.

Quickly becoming one of my favorite

demo discs, *House Of Flying Daggers* has a few scenes that can really show the good and bad of a home theatre setup. The StreamLine Tower 8400 and StreamLine Center Channel 3600 loudspeakers did a very good job keeping up with the overactive tempos of the film, especially in the midrange and lower treble. The Godfathers represented the very quick tempo in the bass nicely, but their slow decay time made for less articulation in the individual notes. While the Godfathers are not as articulate as some of the sealed box subwoofers I have reviewed, they do pack quite a punch, and can play incredibly loud throughout their operable range.

Sending the LFE channel information to the StreamLine Bass Module 1000's can make up some of the lost articulation, with their slightly faster response, but they can not come close to matching the sheer power and depth of the Godfather subwoofers for loading a large room and representing the lower echelon of the frequency range.

## Conclusion

While the M•Design Eleganza series of loudspeakers does have its quirks, they really are beautiful loudspeakers. For the money you might spend on a new set of furniture, why not get furniture that doubles as a good home theatre system?

They do provide a smooth, open midrange, which we humans are most sensitive to, and can be set up to image well around the room. The Eleganza series is definitely a contender in this price range, especially when taking into account their dominance of the increasingly powerful WAF (Wife Acceptance Factor).

The sexy Eleganza StreamLine Tower 8400's, combined with the Center Channel 3600 and Godfather 1500, are designed to be the focal point of any room, with their powerfully elegant allure that begs the question: "Should they be looked at or listened to?" Luckily, you will not be disappointed with either option. ■

regard, as proper physical placement and toe-in angle must be juggled to maximize the effect.

Another aspect of the 8400's that was consistent from disc to disc was the understated highs. The upper treble could be quite gentle, making the high frequency range sound incomplete, like it was hitting a frequency ceiling. Because of the hybrid approach Monster uses with the StreamLine Tower 8400's, as I said earlier, the point source Super Tweeter can have trouble keeping up with the Extended Range drivers, and will roll off quicker than the line source array if you are further than one meter away from the source. This roll off is noticeable in the configuration used for this design, but because the midrange drivers are cut off at such a high frequency, it may not be noticeable to all listeners.

As overall volume levels drop, the "toe tap ability" and presence these loudspeakers will deliver begins to wane. The 8400's can still deliver impressive detail at low levels, but that completely subjective "being there" feeling seems to be lost in the shuffle.

Brian McKnight's soulful voice in Big Phat Band's "Comes Love" was portrayed nicely, with a level of efficiency in the midrange that allowed me to turn the volume as loud as I could stand.

Without the optional StreamLine Bass Module 1000's, the StreamLine Tower 8400's are rather weak in the low frequency realm (as their 62 Hz -3 dB point can attest), and



# M•DESIGN™

Home Theater Never Looked This Good™

## StreamLine™ Towers Bring Style and Performance into Your Home

Great sound is the soul of home theater. It adds life to music, excitement to movies and realism to video games. But traditional loudspeaker designs often resemble big, ugly boxes that detract from décor. M•Design makes it easy to live with high technology with reference-quality speakers that look as stunning as they sound.

M•Design StreamLine™ Towers are the result of over a decade of intensive research resulting in multiple patents. Mid-range drivers feature inverted titanium domes for pinpoint imaging and high-performance responsiveness. Woofers feature inverted aluminum domes for a powerful, extended frequency range. And silk-dome super tweeters deliver a wide dispersion audio field and detailed highs. Plus a patented Line Array technology delivers a "wall-of-sound" traditional loudspeakers can't reproduce. All this housed behind exotic hardwood trims, just the right touch of aluminum accents, and an asymmetrical cross-section that looks great from any angle.

## Home Theater Never Sounded This Good.™

*"timeless Italian-styled design..."*

*"smooth mids with good depth and detail, and a basking warmth..."*

*"...impressive depth and detail around the entire 360° soundfield with good timbre balance between each loudspeaker and impressive imaging around the room."*

—Danny Richelieu,  
Widescreen Review



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