

## MilleniaOne CT 2.1 Speaker System Review

And we thought the Millenia CT was good. Wait till you get a load of these!



### Introduction

For many the recently reviewed Millenia CT system would be considered at the high end of the scale in terms of the convenience 2.1 package solution market. But Paradigm has never really been about compromises and, here in the MilleniaOne CT, is their ultimate effort to bring a proper Hi-Fi flavour to the burgeoning lifestyle audio market. At just South of £1,200 the MilleniaOne CT (Compact Theatre) is certainly in another price league to even its, extremely accomplished, stable mate but then it has the specifications to match with credentials affording it a place in Paradigm's Reference Series. Considering how blown away we were with the 'vanilla' CT will this model take it One step beyond? Frankly, we're itching to find out.

### Summary

The Paradigm MilleniaOne CT is an unusual product in some ways. It's undoubtedly a lifestyle system with the Apple TV style control box and on-board amplification yet its performance is, by degrees of magnitude, far above that of any other such products we've tested. Much of that improvement comes courtesy of - what is for the class - a megaton 14-inch subwoofer but the main speakers are impeccably clear and precise also. We're honestly struggling to think of any weaknesses to highlight. OK, the remote is a bit rubbish and not in keeping with the rest of the high-end feel to the package and there's only a single digital audio input to service your needs but in terms of beautiful audio reproduction, it's exquisite.

If you really haven't the room for a 5.1 system but like the idea of packaged convenience without any sense of concession, we really can't think of anything better than the MilleniaOne CT. It's more expensive than almost all the rest but that's for good reason. The old adage of 'buy cheap, buy twice,' comes to mind and we doubt that, after listening, anyone would come away thinking anything other than it was money well spent. Do we really have to give them back?

Scores	N/A	Very Poor	Poor	Average	Good	Excellent	Reference
Build quality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Connectivity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ease of use	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Video performance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Audio performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Features	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Value for Money	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Overall	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



### Paradigm MilleniaOne CT 2.1 Speaker System

Active 2.1 Speaker System  
Suggested price: £1,199



Reviewed 21st March, 2013 by Mark Hodgkinson

### Key Features

- ▶ Active Speaker Design
- ▶ Compact Design
- ▶ 14-inch Bass Driver
- ▶ Easy Setup
- ▶ Digital Audio Input
- ▶ Compatible with most tablets and smartphones

### Pros

- ▶ Stellar sub for the class
- ▶ Equally at home with movies and music
- ▶ Fantastically crafted
- ▶ Would fill even a large living room with sound
- ▶ Simple to set up

### Cons

- ▶ Remote control is comparatively cheap and nasty
- ▶ Lacks connections
- ▶ More expensive than the rest
- ▶ We have to return it!

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### What's in the Box

Right from the off, it's easy to see the differing approach Paradigm has employed with the MilleniaOne with a couple more boxes to tick off in the audiophile's checklist in terms of the connectivity. Instead of the fairly flimsy speaker cable packaged with the MilleniaCT, the MilleniaOne ships with a much higher grade wire which connects not by proprietary plugs but to push-style binding posts on the backs of the speaker. The included stands are also weightier and have a more high-end anodised finish to them and, unlike 'Junior', the MilleniaOne's come with wall mounting brackets F.O.C. Also in the packaging is the control box; remote control; and all the other necessary cables – Power, Optical, an 'all-purpose' 3.5mm analogue lead and the communication cable that connects the control box to the sub where the magic happens.



### Set-up and Operation

If anything, set up of the MilleniaOne was even more straightforward than that of the Millenia CT, thanks to the traditional speaker wire approach and the binding posts but, other than that, the process was the same. It's just a case of wiring up the speakers, making sure you've slotted the cable through the aperture in the stands first, and then attaching the other ends to the appropriate L/R inputs on the rear of the subwoofer. You'll then want to connect the CAT cable, which communicates between the control box and the amplification/speakers, to the appropriate port on the box and sub which then means all that remains is to hook up a source. Connectivity options could hardly be called generous but the control box really is very diminutive, designed to provide an ideal partnership with an Apple TV, a device it resembles very closely in outward appearances.



Those sparse input choices mentioned above are an S/PDIF digital audio or analogue 3.5mm jack. The latter connection is clearly catering for the ever-growing mobile device market – tablet/smarthphones/MP3 players etc – with the optical input providing the best option for hooking up to your video source. As most flat-panel TVs are equipped with an optical audio out, meaning all connected devices can be replayed through the MilleniaOne, it's a convenient choice but as the quality of the downmixing to stereo is almost certainly better done by the Millenia's processing, you're best swapping out cables, per source, to extract maximum benefit from the speakers. We have asked whether Paradigm will consider including Bluetooth connectivity in future systems but there's nothing immediately on the horizon.



The speakers can be manoeuvred vertically on their stands, to a degree, or horizontally and vertically on the wall brackets for best positioning. When mounted on the stands, the satellite speakers come in at 19.5cm x 11.5cm x 14.5cm (H/W/D) so are very neat and quite small, especially considering their power – more on which later. The subwoofer can be used either vertically, in its heavy rubber stand, or placed on the four supplied bumper pads if you want to orientate it horizontally, which might be useful if you want to hide it under your sofa. In our testing environments, we liked it better on the stand but it was marginal and ultimate performance will be governed by your room characteristics, to an extent.

Other than with the paucity of connections are only other gripe comes in the form of the incredibly petite remote control which doesn't feel befitting of its supporting role to what is a relatively expensive system. It's not so much the proportions, which we can live with - albeit by keeping it safely in pocket to avoid misplacement - it's more the fact that it needs absolute line of sight to function so you won't be able to hide the control box away, should you so desire, unless you're prepared to set up an IR extender. It might be a good idea for Paradigm to invest some thought in to coming up with a wireless controller of some sort.



### Technical Info

As you would expect, Paradigm promises the MilleniaOne is a step-up from the Millenia CT and, at nearly double the cost, you'd certainly hope so but just where are the tangible improvements that justify the extra? We'll get this out of the way here, the MilleniaOne most definitely is a cut above what is still an excellent 2.1 system and it's largely thanks to the added refinement - not to mention oomph - of the subwoofer. Considering what it's capable of delivering, and the components inside, the sub is unfeasibly small measuring only about 36cm in height, 12cm in width and just over 30cm in depth but it packs in a 14-inch x 3-inch driver with a 1.5-inch voice coil. Quite how we're not altogether sure and we'll wax lyrical further down the page but it's a beauty in both looks and performance with its corrugated surround and textured finish; a wolf in (black) sheep's clothing, if ever we heard or saw one!



There are improvements with the main speaker units too with higher quality cast-aluminium cabinets and tweaks to the motor/magnet structures as well as the more solid binding posts and higher grade cable. Of course, that's all a load of marketing guff if there aren't tangible differences but as we were in a position to do direct side-by-side comparison with the two, we can confidently say there are. Where the Millenia was a little warmer than the traditional Paradigm sound, in the mid-range, the MilleniaOne shows more transparency and neutrality. That's not to say the MilleniaOne lacks warmth, the sub is capable of wrapping you in an almighty bear hug of bass from its sealed enclosure but there's more of a monitor sound.



## Listening – Music

Where to start? Put simply, if the MilleniaOne CT had some more traditional audio inputs, you would be far from ashamed having it run as your Hi-Fi stereo system. It's absolutely all there in terms of detail and the MilleniaOne will dish it up as loud as the average could need, or indeed take. For no other reasons than the alphabetical, we started with a spot of Afrika Bambaataa's 'Planet Rock' which is a great test of either end of the frequency range with its thumping bass and pinging synths and all of sudden we were feeling like Party People ourselves; for context, it was a Monday morning and we're far too old to get away with any of that sort of thing but the compulsion to dance was almost unbearable. For decency's sake, we restricted ourselves to some vigorous head nodding and toe-tapping but the MilleniaOne is easily good enough to convince you to make a fool of yourself; the next track, 'Perfect Beat' seemed aptly titled.

If Old Skool Hip Hop isn't your cup of cocoa, that's not a problem. Next on the playlist came the Arctic Monkeys (don't worry we're not doing a full A-Z) and their debut album, which gives a better test of the mid-range with complicated guitar arrangements and the MilleniaOne was as tight and precise as Sheffield's Fab Four. What started out as an intent to dip in and sample, ended with a complete and immersive reprise of the entire album. Irresistible stuff. The MilleniaOne showed its harmonic side with the Beach Boys 'Pet Sounds' – the special edition 4-disc 'Sessions' version of Pet Sounds has some vocal only tracks which will long stay in the memory.

The MilleniaOne also likes the ladies. We only got to the letter 'E' with female vocals but if you heard Eva Cassidy's 'Songbird' Album played loud enough on the MilleniaOne and didn't have a tear in your eye by the end, we'd advise checking yourself for a pulse. Beautiful vocals like that don't need added colour and the faithfulness to source of the speakers really shines through. For a complete change of pace Nirvana's 'Nevermind' proved the MilleniaOne's versatility with every chugging bass line, crash of drums and the inimitability of Cobain's bitter-sweet delivery beautifully preserved. Our only complaint is that we have to hand them back. Oh, and make sure you remove the grille's for optimum performance, it really does make a difference with these babies in the higher frequencies.

## Listening – Movies

As we said earlier, you're certainly best leaving the down-mixing of 5.1 audio to the DSP of the Millenia One than leave it to your TV. It's not that you'll get bad results doing it that way, and we can understand the temptation of convenience, but the sound processing on the MilleniaOne is uncannily precise with multi-channel audio. Turning unashamedly to the 5.1 Dolby Digital mix from *Spartacus: War of the Damned* and we could instantly sense how the MilleniaOne was putting sound to ear with such exactness that the Gods themselves would be honoured, absent reason for complaint. Spartacus carries one of the most demanding low-end soundtracks we can remember from a TV series but we could push the sub up to its peak level without losing anything. No mean feat but this is no average 2.1 package.

Next in the player and up for scrutiny was the astonishing soundtrack to the *Bourne Legacy* and, again, we were left nothing but impressed by the sheer scale of the MilleniaOne's output. More than once we did a double-take over the shoulder to see if someone had slipped in a pair of rear surrounds, so capable is it of filling the room and creating such superb localisation. It should go without saying, by now, that the subwoofer was more than up to the task of the action scenes but it was more the atmospheric recreation of the various locations that stood out, delivered with such nuance and sureness of touch that it was transportational. Given the undoubted musicality of the MilleniaOne it shouldn't be surprising that movie scores were delivered with absolute grace with even complex orchestral pieces are given the Paradigm spit and polish. And the MilleniaOne doesn't just do 'loud', if late night movie watching is your thing, and it is ours, a twiddle on the sub's own volume dial and a few notches down on the remote will see it produce clear audio with dialogue intact without waking up the family. Tip: Start low and keep going up in stages until you wake someone up, then one back on the dial.

## Our feedback for Paradigm

- Do something about that remote, such as completely change it!
- Bluetooth could be a good option for the lifestyle market

If you are interested in buying the Paradigm MilleniaOne CT 2.1 Speaker System, we hope you will use our [advertisers](#).