

YG Acoustics Floor Standing Loudspeakers Hailey 3

Striking in every way

\$63,400/pair
yg-acoustics.com

One of the most compelling things about the world's finest products, be it speakers, watches, cameras, you name it – is the ease of enjoying them in a fashion that you no longer think about the object in use. There's no more longing for additional performance, or an aspect of use that annoys you. A Rolex Submariner, a Leica M6 (if you're a film person) or M10 (if you aren't), the Eames Lounge Chair (a real one), or a late 80s 3.2 Porsche Carrera. I'm sure you have your own list, but this is where I place the Haileys. The level of performance they deliver is something I doubt you will ever tire of.

This was a more difficult review to write than most, only because the Haileys deliver such an immersive experience that hours pass between paragraphs. Some high-performance loudspeakers make for dynamic demos, and that's great for the 30 seconds you catch of Nils Lofgren's plucky guitar opening to "Keith Don't Go," but then lose their luster during extended listening. The Haileys sail through all the prerequisite audiophile test tracks, but at the end of the day they are incredibly musical in a way that you do not want to leave the listening chair for anything more than to change the record.



Thanks to all the new technology implemented at YG over the last few years, much of this effortlessness comes from the low distortion and careful attention to maximizing phase coherence in the recent models. YG claims no more than +/- 5 degrees of phase shift, which is tight indeed. Many studies backup the idea that the human ear is more sensitive to phase anomalies than anything else. Again, this is a major contributor to the effortless presentation these speakers deliver.

Even though the new speakers look very similar to the originals from an aesthetic perspective, every aspect has been re-examined, reconfigured, and redesigned. Even the printed circuit board used for the crossover network is CNC machined in the YG factory. The new models use 3.1mm-thick electrically non-reactive sheets of a secret material mated to pure copper – twice as much copper as in previous YG crossovers and four times the industry standard – and they machine out the copper they don't use.

No one pays this close attention to fine detail. YG's Duncan Taylor smiles as he says "that's our biggest marketing challenge, to let potential customers know how much of an improvement the new speakers truly are." Yet if you are familiar with the original YG speakers, you'll hear it immediately.

Top of the list

Listening to Trey Gunn and Tu-ners newest release T-1 Contact Information is a prog excursion full of atmospheric sounds, blazing riffs, and of course killer bass lines. The YG Hailey 3s do an amazing job creating a massive soundfield with incredible coherence feeling more like a great surround setup, or perhaps the enormous 9-foot-tall Sound Labs ESLs. (But with way more transient ability) One of the Hailey's main strengths is the integration of the drivers feeling like one big full range speaker. That's only part of the story.

Taylor explains to me that this speaker is one of the latest models that is filled with "new tech and engineering, with few remnants of the original YG products." Where the initial YG speakers were incredibly resolving, they required perfection in room treatment and music quality, and to some they brought a fatigue with them that made for short listening sessions. Today at YG, those traits are a thing of the past. Forget everything you think you know about these speakers – though they have similar physical shapes these all new models are a pinnacle of loudspeaker design.

If you are looking for a pair of speakers offering high resolution and low distortion (make that extremely low distortion) without ever feeling harsh, and you value tonal accuracy – YG should be at the top of your list.

The 200 pound (each) Hailey 3 speakers are a three-way passive speaker, taking up a small footprint, relatively speaking, at 13 inches wide and 21 inches deep at the bottom, gently tapering up to 8 inches wide and 16 inches deep at the top. The standard finishes are silver and black anodized aluminum, but customization is something YG has been testing and planning to eventually offer. While visiting the YG factory earlier this year, there were some custom-finish speakers on their way to a client that were absolutely stunning.

The surface of a YG speaker surpasses even what I've seen in the world's finest automobiles. Yep, they are that good. These speakers define understated elegance, and more than one friend that has always been "metal speaker" adverse, loved the look, feel, and finish of the Hailey 3s. They will look at home in any décor.

The precision metalwork doesn't end there. YG painstakingly machines the rigid, well-damped cones of their drivers in their facility too.

"It's one thing to see the YGs being made, and it's quite the other to run your hands across the surface of a YG speaker. As a crazed car guy I have a major appreciation for things built like this."



YG uses a soft-dome tweeter, placing a structure underneath the dome that they call the “Lattice,” which is machined from solid aluminum just like the cones of the midrange and woofers. Duncan tells me that nearly 99% of the solid block that the driver cones are made from is machined away to produce them. Those of you that are concerned about the environmental aspect of this process, fear not. Every speck of unwanted material is recycled at the YG factory. These cones are a work of art.

Simple setup

For speakers weighing over 200 pounds each, the Hailey’s can actually be set up by one person.

While the review pair arrived in road cases, YG sends their speakers in a bespoke crate, so you can bring the container to your listening room, tip it up, and slide the Hailey’s out. These are the easiest to unpack large speakers I’ve encountered, underlining the thought process behind every aspect of the YG’s design. The spiked feet come with stainless spike cups, so you can adapt them to any flooring situation.

Even with random placement in the 24 x 36-foot listening room (on the short wall) about 12 feet apart and about five feet from the rear wall, the Haileys paint an enormous soundstage. Fortunately, Duncan was kind enough to stop by for the day and fine-tune them to perfection. For those who see this as the manufacturer stacking the deck in their favor, I always prefer this. Especially with a speaker that I have precious little experience with. It’s always helpful to the review process when a manufacturer can either tweak the final setup or reassure you that all is well. That way the evaluation can start on an easy note. 30 minutes later, the Haileys are placed to perfection by moving them a bit wider apart, placing

The highly revealing nature of the Hailey 3s is further emphasized during the setup process, when it was time to attach the jumpers between the three sets of binding posts on the rear of the speakers. (As a side note, my demo pair was tri-amp-capable, something YG now offers in addition to the standard single binding post arrangement, though they suspect most customers will use the single.) For this review, the folks at Cardas Audio made up a custom set of jumpers from Cardas Clear cable, because I use Clear in my main system. I suggest this with any speaker that you choose to use jumpers with – I have always achieved the best results combining jumpers made from the same cable as the main speaker cables. Taylor tells me that internally, YGs are wired with the exact same Cardas wire, so this makes perfect sense. I’ve never heard a speaker affected by six inches of wire as much as I did with the Hailey 3s.

The speakers arrived a day before the jumpers, so during the initial listening, some zip cord was pressed into use. Not good. At first, it was suspected that the speakers needed more run in time, but the following day when the Cardas jumpers arrived, this became a completely different movie indeed.

Articulate bass

Being used to a six-pack of REL subwoofers makes it easy to become spoiled for low-frequency response that is accurate, powerful, and defined. There are many large speakers that can reproduce tones down to 30 or even 25Hz, but the level of low-frequency resolution they actually deliver (as with a number of subwoofers, too) is questionable. Moving air is one dimension, but being able to hear Jaco Pastorius’ fingers pluck the strings, with the resulting harmonic structure intact is quite another.



Even though the Haileys can't move as much air as a six pack of REL's they do achieve a level of low-frequency resolution and detail that is on the same level and this is indeed rare. We all have different goals concerning low frequency response. My personal bias here is resolution over sheer weight, yours may be different. In addition the YGs bring a wide dynamic range to the listening experience and the ability to deliver high resolution at low listening levels. This is a true display of high performance.

Swapping the Pass XA200.8 monoblocks, for the 15 watt per channel ampsoundsound Bryce mono blocks is equally enticing. Even at a one-watt level, these speakers deliver deep, rich, and detailed low frequencies. It's worth mentioning the Bryce amplifiers have tremendous bass response, but that's a subject of another review. The way these speakers capture leading and trailing transients on drums and bass guitar is so realistic, you might be shocked hearing it for the first time. In a good way of course.

At least eight or nine different amplifiers from the 3 watt Coincident SETs to the 600 watt per channel PS Audio BHK 600 Monos (tube and solid-state) were used while evaluating the Hailey 3s. The common thread here is quality. Because of the resolving nature of the YGs, they reveal every source component, cable, and vibration control device in your system – though notmercilessly. To get the most these speakers can deliver, I suggest the best cables andcomponents that you can pair them with. I can't imagine the YGs ever being the weak link in your system.

Seamless

Too many high-performance speakers, especially those with the ability to play very loud, don't always integrate the low, mid, and high frequencies, feeling natural and convincing. Precious few of the world's top speakers are able to do this, andnearly all the ones I've heard are considerably more expensive than the Haileys.

This is a truly balanced speaker. YG prides themselves on their extensive research in the area of design depth and computer modeling to implement their crossovers. They even build their own printed circuit boards from scratch, with no 90-degree corners in the PC board traces.

They are CNC machined in-house from raw board blanks, made specifically for YG. Components are selected and tolerances meticulously matched before extensive listening tests verify what's been done on the design table.

The crossover is one part of the equation, yet having custom drivers that work in as close to perfect harmony as possible is the other part of the equation. Some manufacturers take a different approach, employing more complex crossover networks to achieve their goals. Taking the latter approach does not always make for the ultimate in a smooth transition between drivers, and that last bit of clarity that only the finest loudspeakers can deliver. The YG Haileys more than deserve to be in this exclusive realm.

That seamless clarity the Haileys deliver offers a musical experience that is not only realistic, but non fatiguing. These are speakers that you can listen to all day at any volume leveland never tire of. That's the highest compliment I can pay them.

The rest of the range

Great as everything else is, these speakers are equally smooth throughout the frequency spectrum. Those of you that enjoy this aspect of single driver or panel speakers will appreciate how well the three drivers in the Hailey's work together. No matter how loud or soft the HALEYS are played, they deliver the electrical impulses presented to them with one voice.

If you really want to blast the system, you will need more than 15 watts per channel, and while the Haileys reveal a lot at low volume, they are glorious when being played loud. Whether you're listening to Deep Purple's *Made in Japan*, *The 1812 Overture*, or grooving on some Slowdive, these speakers take you anywhere you want to go.

Ironically when YG hit the market years ago under their original ownership, they claimed to be the "world's greatest loudspeaker." While I can't make that claim about any one loudspeaker, I'd certainly say that today YG is in that small top tier of the world's finest speakers without hesitation.

