



HIFI-TEST

Test: Bryston Middle T | Tower speaker

Complements & compliments

by MARTIN MERTENS | FEBRUARY 28, 2019

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Bryston has been building amplifiers for over 40 years. In addition to this, the Canadian manufacturer has been using speakers for some time. To what extent compliments hail for the complements, we test on the Bryston Middle T Speaker.

Bryston - these are the Canadians with the fantastic power amplifiers who have won two of FAIRAUDIO'S FAVOURATE AWARDS: ([Bryston 4B³](#) and [Bryston 7B³](#)). Yes, they also build loudspeakers. No, not as long as amplifiers - namely only for about five years, whereas the first Bryston amplifier already in 1973 saw the light of day. Whether the "boxes" are as good as the amps? We will check this in more detail with the help of the floor loudspeaker Bryston Middle T

How does a company that has been building amplifiers for more than 30 years come up with the idea of building loudspeakers? The story has been heard in similar terms before but: James Tanner, vice president of Bryston, went in search of the ultimate speakers for his private listening pleasure. And since no speaker on the market met his requirements, in 2010 he started a private research project to build the loudspeaker he was looking for himself. He not only resorted to resources at Bryston, but sought competent support in the industry. Among other things, he found the also in Canada-based speaker manufacturer Axiom. The rest can be imagined: the speakers designed for their own use proved to be so good that Bryston decided to produce them in series and expand the range. Which, of course, makes it easier, because Bryston has a good name in the scene and an established sales and dealer network.

The fact that Bryston and Axiom have a partner in their boat that has the know-how and production capacities in those areas that Bryston does not own in-house is even easier. So it happens that Bryston has set up a considerable range of loudspeaker models within a relatively short time. You can see the models here and there, where Bryston got technical inspiration from Axiom. Which is completely alright, after all, not everyone has to reinvent the wheel. And if a partner has particular competence in certain areas, it is smart to use it. Bryston has Axiom, a partner in the boat, with know-how and production capacity in the areas that Bryston does not have in-house.



The model Bryston Middle T loaded here for the test represents - which is surprising - the middle model of the elaborate T-series. Below the T-series Bryston also offers the A-series a less expensive line. Within the T series, there are also the models T Passive and T Signature over the Middle T. Whereby the T Signature differs essentially from the T-Passive by a further improved, external crossover . The external crossover also allows for an active system - more on that later. "Below" the Bryston Middle T, there is still the T Bookshelf, which is more accurate than anything but a bookshelf speaker, but belongs to a speaker stand, since it is just not a standing box. Add to that the center and two different subwoofers, because you can not bring anything on the far continents without surround or home theater option to the market.

Personally, I consider the Middle T, along with the T Bookshelf, one of the most consensus models in the Bryston portfolio. The larger models are physically very powerful and show some design principles, which are difficult to convey in high-end circles - there are about double midrange and tweeter, which are not mounted in D'Appolito arrangement or very high Casing. The Bryston Middle T, on the other hand, are slender pillars with a height of exactly one meter - if you leave aside the extraneous Outrigger and the associated spikes. Otherwise come again about five centimeters. The depth of at least 41 centimeters is not noticeable, since the housings rejuvenate

after about one third of their depth. The width (27 centimeters) is measured that the two 8-inch woofers with their laterally flattened baskets have just enough space. This is followed by a 5.25-inch midrange and a 1-inch tweeter made of titanium. In the midrange and woofers, the membranes are made of aluminum with a ceramic coating. Separates at 160 and 2300 Hertz. Thus, the woofers with their impressive long-stroke surrounds, which are supported by two rear, flow-optimized shaped bass reflex ports, mainly function as a subwoofer.



8 INCH WOOFERS IN BRYSTON MIDDLE T

The housings are stiffened on the inside. Pictures published by Bryston in the brochure about her speakers show various bracings. Since I can not resist the old "knocking test" and am surprised that it sounds pretty hollow at the rear, sloping parts of the side walls in the lower third, as I do not really expect this in rigid cases. Let's hear what's going on in the music business.

A word on active systems: Bryston now offers for all T models the ability to deliver them without passive crossovers. The connections for the tweeter, midrange and woofer are then led out at the rear via individual pole terminals. In this case, the active crossover Bryston BAX-1 is required for operation together with suitable power amplifiers. Bryston offers the three-channel power amplifier 21B³, which then requires one per box, or the six-channel power amp 24B³. Passive versions, those with a built in crossover, have bi-wiring terminals for connection to the amplifier.

Speaking of amplifiers: Bryston indicates the efficiency of the Middle T with 88 dB / W / m at an impedance of 4 ohms. This is not overly lush and considering the two long-throw woofers, I think a potent amplifier for operating the Bryston Middle T is advisable. Fortunately, Bryston has some matching power amplifiers on offer. Fortunately, one of these power stations is in the form of a [Bryston 4B³](#) in my hi-fi rack. Best conditions for the upcoming hearing test.

Bryston Middle T: Sound test & comparisons



Whether with or without front cover: The Bryston Middle T are very sizable, optically well integrated into the living room speakers

When I look at four woofers from my listening position, which promise decent displacement with wide beads and sit in a bulky body, I can not help it. Then the parts first have to show what they put on the street or better, in the listening room. And while it's still early in the evening, I'm sure I'll be able to give my neighbors a little something ... With *James Blakes* Version of "Limit to Your Love" should let the Canadians shake the place. Do it impressively. Although they are more active in the upper part of the deep synth-woof, which is somewhere between 30 and 40 hertz, than at even lower frequencies, which they also audibly reproduce, but in comparison more restrained. I assume that the tuning frequency of the bass reflex enclosure, below which the bass response drops, is somewhere in between. Bryston gives the lower limit frequency at 33 hertz. That comes and is really deep. The only passive box so far, which put both frequency ranges almost equally intensively in my room, was the Nubert 140. And that stops only at 25 Hertz lower cutoff frequency.

The strangely "stopped" low-pitched impulses of the track "Die Another Day" on *Madonna's* album *American Life* I always like to use to hear whether bass can also "slow down" quickly, and be well controlled. The Bryston Middle T hurls the deep impulses so powerfully into the room that it is a pleasure and are evidently more trained on a certain nonchalance than maximum control. Which is also dependent on the speaker cable, I'll get back to it soon. For acoustic instruments that have a natural swing-out behavior, the Bryston Middle T will show their full potential one way or another: **For example, when it comes to Sven Fallers double bass - together with Stefanie Bolz Part of the somewhat quirky jazz duo Le Bang Bang - the Bryston Middle T show themselves marvellously variable**, pay attention to scratches like swinging out every single string, and authentically transmit every note together with the "thrust" of the sound box. This is a bass to revel.



I really enjoy it when I dig in my kitsch corner – film musicals. The soundtrack to *Chicago*, I just enjoy the rich bass. Nice, if loudspeakers can also hit the timpani properly.



However, the bass reproduction of the Bryston Middle T can be audibly affected. On the one hand, the loudspeakers definitely tolerate larger spaces and a freer setup, which of course further restrains the bass, if that's what you want. On the other hand, it is worthwhile to experiment with different speaker cables. Personally, the bass performance of the Middle T with my Cardas Clear Light speaker cables, with which I started the listening test, is a touch too lush. A set of Black Cat cables which is also here for the test, but brings exactly the level of control, with which I can live well.

Let's get to the most sensitive centers: here the Bryston Middle T are wonderfully clean and flawless. The bass does not interfere unduly with the midrange - obviously it's very wise that Bryston separates the bass relatively early: Stefanie Bolz's voice gives the Bryston Middle T completely clear and precise above the double bass. I am particularly impressed by how free the entire soundscape of the large speakers and how naturally the singer materializes exactly where it belongs. But we will come to the room later. First of all, it is important to hear the middle reproduction in detail.

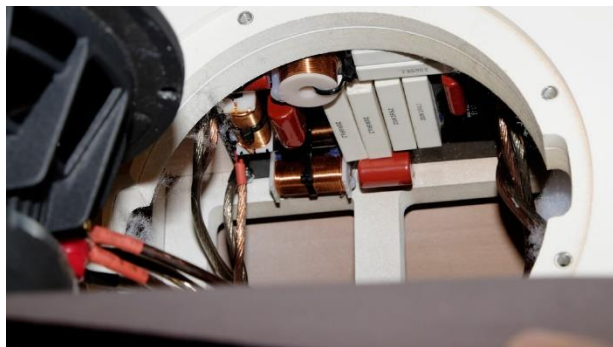


"Detail" is the right keyword, because in addition to a clean tonality, the midrange with precision and high resolution. In *Gregory Porter's* album *Nat, King 'Cole & Me*- yes, admittedly a bit cheesy - the Bryston Middle T present the charismatic organ of Mr Porter to the point. *Leonard Cohen's* voice goes on *You Want It Darker*- a bleak, yet conciliatory, wonderful legacy, which I already rather accept the kitschy, opulent arrangements in opposition to the dark lyrics - just below the skin when it over the Canadians are leaving. Just as precise and detailed transport the Bryston Middle T women's voices:

Feist's fragile organ, I used the original version of "Limit to Your Love" from the album *The Reminder* here, reproducing the Middle T well-balanced, coherent and with haunting melancholy.

Yes, in the midrange the Bryston Middle T sounds really, really good!

VIEW OF THE CROSSOVER OF THE MIDDLE T



This also applies to instrumental music. One of the saddest piano pieces I know is "Tears for Esbjörn". A memorial to the deceased Esbjörn Svensson of *Iiro Rantala and Michael Wollny* on the album *Jazz at Berlin Philhamonic*, The piece achieves part of its expression and sadness in passages in which individual piano tones are given a lot of space - one hears each of their details: their moment of impact, their emergence and swelling, the

vibration of the string, which the soundboard absorbs and provides with abundance, the body of the grand piano, which seems to ground the whole thing deep down to the faintest fading out and reverberation of the sound. Can a single piano sound represent a whole life? Definitely about **the Bryston Middle T, because it transmits every single sound with a sheer infinite variety - and makes the sounds seem so eerily haunting.**

Phew, quickly switch back to lively music. Almost the antidote to "Tears for Esbjörn" are the complex compositions *Astor Piazzolla* on the live album *Adiós Nonino: El Concierto De Lugano in 1983*. The dense network of intricate melodic lines of various instruments minutely aufzulisten the speakers - I can every instrument, the I focus while listening, tracking individually, but can just as much affect the overall impression on me.

Speaking of the overall impression, even larger arrangements, big band, strings, etc. are clearly intoned by the Bryston Middle T, with exact timbres precise transients and everything you could wish for. My compact Valeur Audio Micropoint 4 SE (price: around 8,000 euros) certainly plays very well in all these aspects, but the dedicated midrange Bryston Middle T can do everything even better and, above all, more coherent, effortless. The legendary Nubert nuVero 140 with its two flat-panel midrange speakers per channel is not quite there either. Although they also resolve well, they do not sound as coherent as the Bryston.



THE TWEETER OF BRYSTON MIDDLE T

The tweeters are also very clean, well resolved and accurately. My Valeur audio give the timbres even more gloss, radiate more, offer even more subtleties, but as in the bass, the rating is a matter of taste. The "merciless" treble of the Valeur can also be too much of a good thing. Too much, for example, to endure the vocals of Stefanie Bolz for an entire album. That does not work for me about the Micropoint 4 SE. By contrast, this is

not such a big challenge with the Bryston Middle T. And even in the treble you can "play" well with the Brystons. Different cables can make the difference between "okay" and "excellent".

Their virtues best serve the Bryston Middle T when running at a low level. In the whisper-quiet game at the hearing threshold remains a little of the wonderful resolution and the dynamic talents of Canadians on the track. In the other direction, towards high levels, they seem to know no limits. Up to clearly no longer neighborhood-friendly levels they remain clean, accurate and show no compression effects. Also, the sound does not break apart, as is the case with some speakers, if you really go level. The Bryston Middle T let even highest levels seem unimpressed. And that makes a lot of fun! When the Middle T goes

through all the dynamics of a symphonic orchestra, not a dry eye stays. Listen to the "Molto Vivace" *Beethoven's ninth* neatly loud. I automatically had to think about Alex and his way of listening to Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange*. Do you know the movie scene where he lies on the bed in front of his walled speakers?

As already indicated, the spatial depiction of the Bryston Middle T is first-class. Especially with larger speakers, I almost always expect that the playback does not sound quite as free and detached as with small speakers. That's partly psychoacoustics. Large speakers are visually much more present and one always has somehow in view, where the sound comes from - and means to hear it in the episode. On the other hand, it is also the experience that large loudspeakers can rarely completely deny their location.



This feat, however, masters the Bryston in an excellent way. Although they are visually very present and I like to look at them - beautiful, conventional speakers just - their physical locations seem to have nothing to do with the music. The acoustic events take place completely detached from the speakers. Singer or smaller casts seem to stand in the space - the sharpness of localization is great, all sound sources have clear contours. Incidentally, this also works very well for shorter listening distances. Which is by no means a matter of course for adult tower speakers:

When I recall the Nubert nuVero 140 again, I recall larger listening distances, which were necessary for the drivers distributed almost over the entire height of the speakers to create a homogeneous interplay and thus bring a "full-latching" spatiality - D'Appolito arrangement or not. Singer or smaller casts seem to stand in the space - the sharpness of localization is great, all sound sources have clear contours. Incidentally, this also works very well for shorter listening distances. Which is by no means a matter of course for adult tower speakers: When I recall the Nubert nuVero 140 again, I recall larger listening distances, which were necessary for the drivers distributed almost over the entire height of the speakers to create a homogeneous interplay and thus bring a "full-latching" spatiality - D'Appolito arrangement or not.



It is impressive what the Bryston Middle T accomplishes when playing great orchestral music. Finding myself quickly in a large orchestra hall succeeds with an ease that astounds me. These loudspeakers can create acoustically large, enormously high and deep spaces. In any case, the Bryston are not least an urgent recommendation for classic fans. Ideally those with a freestanding home. Not that the Middle T are particularly problematic in terms of

location or need a lot of space - even in my 18-square-meter listening room they work perfectly - but with these speakers you can also enjoy uninterrupted fortissimo passages, like when the volumes reach live levels.

How does a company that has been building amplifiers for more than 40 years come up with the idea of building "boxes"? Maybe simply because you wanted to create speakers that bring out the explicit benefits of their power amplifiers. They offer a powerful bass, where the amps can show how confidently they control heavy woofer membranes and thus put a rock solid bass foundation in the room. Loudspeakers that deliver exceptionally clean mid-range performance that scores with high resolution, accurate dynamic fine gradation, and perfect timbres. Simply nothing to me, you do not implement anything that brings the amplifier to the terminals. Loudspeakers that provide

a long-term hearing-friendly, pleasantly balanced tweeter that is sized that one likes to follow "strenuous" music for hours. Loudspeakers that create an impressive sense of space and easily place you in large orchestra halls, converting the power of the amplifiers into immense levels as needed, bringing the listener closer to the original volume of an orchestra.

All of this makes the **Bryston Middle T** truly outstanding.

IN CONCLUSION:

The **Bryston Middle T** are characterized by:



1. An "above everything" is balanced tonality; in very low-toned music, the bass likes to play something in the foreground, but does not sound unpleasant and does not cover other frequency ranges, but provides an impressive, stable foundation for the overall performance.
2. Wonderfully clear-cut mids. The midrange is clearly the absolute chocolate side of the Middle T. Resolution, fine dynamics, timbres and transient reproduction are exemplary. Whether voices or instruments, small ensembles or large orchestra, classical or hard rock - the centers of the Canadians are always exemplary. In the price comparison Middle T are here very far ahead.
3. A tweeter, which offers a decent resolution and generally supports the balanced sound rather than dominates.
4. A certain "minimum level requirement", whispering levels are not necessarily the business of Middle T.
5. A fascinating space. Localization, sharpness of contours and the illumination of the recording room in all dimensions are outstanding features of the Bryston speakers.
6. Great dynamic qualities. The excellent fine-dynamic differentiation to which the Middle T are capable comes into its own when you hear something louder. Since they seem to know no bounds, they are ideal for people who also like to hear loud music.