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# BROWN SAFE

HOME \* AUDIO



**T**HE Sennheiser HD800 headphones (860.434.9190, [www.sennheiserusa.com](http://www.sennheiserusa.com)) break new technological ground in several ways. Consider their 2.2-inch transducer—the largest among all dynamic headphones—which enables a staunch low-end response without sacrificing the high frequencies, or their enormous frequency response: 6 to 51,000 Hz. In the process of developing the HD800, Sennheiser engineers actually patented several of their creations, among them an innovative ring-shaped driver with minimal surface area. This shape reduces undesired resonances that can result in high-register distortion. The acousticians also devised an unusual, angled ear cup that transmits sound into the ear canal as naturally as possible. These innovations, and others, deliver in a big way. The HD800 produces sound so crisp that recording imperfections become readily audible: the soft release of a flautist's breath, the scratch of a bow along a violin string. Background noise never sounded so good. —B.S.B.

\*

Joseph D'Appolito went to work for Snell Acoustics full-time last year, shortly after conceiving the **Snell Acoustics Illusion Reference loudspeaker** (978.538.6262, [www.snellacoustics.com](http://www.snellacoustics.com)). D'Appolito is known for designing the ideal driver arrangement, which places a lone tweeter between two midrange transducers. This design—called the D'Appolito array—allows for a flawless crossover from middle to high frequencies and eliminates inconsistencies in radial dispersion known as lobing errors.

The Illusion, priced at \$50,000 per pair, employs D'Appolito's unique driver design, along with two soul-pounding 10-inch woofers in each enclosure. Each nearly 5-foot-tall speaker is tapered asymmetrically to minimize resonance within the cabinet, which contributes significantly to the purity of the Illusion's audio reproduction. Having literally written the book on testing loudspeakers (*Testing Loudspeakers*, Audio Amateur Press, 1998), D'Appolito anticipated that, upon its release, the Illusion would be critiqued by audiophiles around the globe. To no one's surprise, their endorsements were unanimous. —B.S.B. ☐



Sennheiser HD800 headphones and Snell Acoustics Illusion Reference loudspeaker.