Adam A5 Studio Monitors | £499

Adam's latest monitor bridges the gap between nearfield and desktop. ***Jon Musgrave*** wonders whether their signature sound will be compromised

WHAT IS IT?

Powered compact monitor for desktop and near-field monitoring

CONTACT

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HIGHLIGHTS

1 Flexible EQ options
2 Unflattering sound
3 Useful stereo linking option avilable

PRICING

Gloss black or white finish also available
£528

SPECS

Tweeter: ART ribbon tweeter
Woofer: 5.5" Rohacell / Carbonfibre
Amplification: 2 x 25 Watts RMS
Frequency response: 55Hz to 35kHz (+/- 3dB)
Crossover frequency: 2.2kHz
Maximum peak output per pair: >= 110dB SPL
Inputs: XLR (balanced) and phono (unbalanced)
Input impedance: 10KOhm
Magnetically shielded
Size:
172 x 200x 285mm
Weight:
5kg

Over the past few years German speaker manufacturer Adam Audio has turned its attention to the more affordable end of the market. Welcome news when you consider their top monitors can cost thousands of pounds. Their latest and smallest monitor is the A5. Similar in concept to their A7, but reduced in scale, it features the same type of woofer but in 5.5" form, and of course their acclaimed ART (Accelerating Ribbon Technology) tweeter.

Power comes from two 25W onboard amps, with the main level and power switch conveniently located on the front panel. On the back panel you'll find three additional controls. The first is a straightforward tweeter level (+/- 4dB), but there are also two tone controls offering shelving EQ at 6kHz up and 150Hz down (+/- 6dB on each).

Inputs are on both balanced XLRs and unbalanced phonos, but there are also a couple of further phonos labelled as 'stereo link'. This additional feature allows you to hook the two monitors together, controlling the volumes of both from one level control. A nice touch if you're running them directly from your soundcard. Finally, the A5 also comes in three finishes – matt black, gloss black and gloss white at an extra cost.

All-in-one

At just under 11-inches tall, these are pretty compact monitors, but at five kilos, when you pick them up, you know they're jam-packed with goods. Although technically like to the A7, the A5 is visually different, and the most obvious difference is the split-front bass port. Also worth noting is the integrated front grill. Round the back things are very tidy, with the amplification and heat sinks all tucked away and at less than eight-inches deep, their footprint should be fine for most desktop users.

In use, the stereo link feature requires you to plumb both left and right channels into one speaker (either will do as they're both the same), and then use the link output to feed one channel to the second monitor. With all cables plugged up, the linking LED lights up on the front panel of the first monitor, letting you know it's both active and the master.

The only slight problem with the whole thing is you can only do this using unbalanced connectors. So, if you want full balanced hook-up you'll have to stick to the XLR inputs and forget about using the stereo link.

The sonics

Adam monitors have an enviable reputation for clear upfront sound. The A5s follow in this tradition, and my first impression (having not listened to a pair for quite a while) is that they could become tiring over long periods. Alas, this is often the case for good monitors and not a criticism.

Almost predictably, having spent some time fiddling with the various EQ options and levels, for monitoring at least I came to the conclusion they sounded best in their flat state. Even so, with some boost from both the built-in bottom and top EQs, it was easy to replicate a more flattering and 'bigger' hi-fi style sound.

Given the small amps you might expect these to lack volume – they don't. But for me like all monitors built to this scale apart from the obvious tail off in the low end, they do lack a sense of overall scale. Even so, for my money, these are some of the best small monitors I've ever heard, and present major competition for similar models from the likes of Genelec. A great choice for the small studio. FM

FutureMusic VERDICT

BUILD
VALUE
EASE OF USE
VERSATILITY
RESULTS

The A5 is an impressive compact monitor offering genuine competition for smaller models

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