

HK AUDIO ELEMENTS ACOUSTICS ONE £1,566  
GUITAR AMPS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SIMON LEES



# HK Audio Elements Acoustics One £1,566

The latest portable, modular full-range PA system for solo performers and duos *by Mick Taylor*

So, guitarists and PA systems, then... endless connections, tons of spaghetti leads, big heavy boxes – it's not really a part of the gigging process that anyone relishes, is it?

HK Audio, Germany's highly regarded pro audio brand (the same people who design and build Hughes & Kettner guitar amps) has a neat solution to the pain of PA systems. This innovative new modular system comprises active and passive bass units, a mid/high line-array cabinet and some very clever cableless poles, stands and mounting options.

On test here we have the simple one-bin-and-two-tops system that, when fully erected using the EP1 pole, stands a little over two metres tall.

Setting it up is simplicity itself, the connections between them being made when the components are stacked together – it's extremely neat, and mercifully quick. Our sole concern is if HK decides at some point in the future to change or modify the connection system, which might cause compatibility issues. At least you know where you are with cables and standard jack/XLR/Speakon connectivity. On the upside, the E-Connect system is incredibly neat: this rig looks about as elegant as a PA ever could.

Integrated into the E110 Sub A subwoofer (the big box at the bottom) is a 600-watt class D digital power amp, which drives everything. Controls and connections are minimal; a TRS/XLR input where you plug in your chosen source, a 'through' port that sends a line-level balanced signal to other Elements amps/powered monitors or what have you, and a Speakon speaker out for connecting further Elements speakers. Just make sure you don't exceed the number of total cabinets outlined in the manual. Finally, there's a

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switch to configure the correct output/EQ going to the mid/high cabinets. Diagrams make sure you can't get it wrong. But what to plug in?

## In Use

The Elements system is designed to be used with a mixer. The only input gain control is a +4/-10dB switch; use the former for XLR line-

## The Rivals

All of the following include their own preamp/mixer, which the Elements system does not. The superb **Bose L1 Model II system with T1 ToneMatch module** (£2,597) is a more complete solo or duo rig, but not as flexible as the Elements system for building a bigger PA. The **Fishman SA2200 SoloAmp** (£1,299) is the simplest PA-on-a-stick solution – all in one box – and very good it is too for hassle-free gigging. Also, do check out the **SR Technology Jam 400** (£1,071): less stick, more PA-in-a-box, plus in-built digital effects.

level balanced signals from mixers, and the latter for unbalanced 6.4mm jacks as a general rule of thumb. After that it's very simple: Elements is completely at the mercy of your sources. We fed it with a Peavey 16FX desk for a two vocal/two guitar/backing tracks duo mix, and an LR Baggs Venue DI for pure acoustic guitar fun.

The throw from the eight-speaker (four 3.5-inch drivers in each unit) line array is very impressive; it's a superbly balanced sound that might not, on first listen, sound massively loud, but the sheer quality of that sound belies its considerable sonic reinforcement ability. The spread from the top drivers is impressive, if not ultimately as 3D-like as Bose's L1 model II (which isn't necessarily a bad thing, it should be said). It copes with small-bar duties with ease, and is underpinned with more than enough full, solid bass for the aforementioned duo performance. There really isn't much more to say – it's loud, it's clean and it reproduces whatever you feed it with... as long as it's not stereo, of course – we're mono all the way with just one amp.

If you do hit the front end of the Elements power amp with too much signal, it has a built-in

limiter, denoted by the green signal LED turning red. Brief forays into the red are okay, but if it stays there for an extended period, you'll need to turn down your source signal to avoid compression or distortion.

### Verdict

A lot of us musos are still tied to the big, heavy box solutions to PA. For small gigs however – bars, hotels, what have you – and assuming you're not Motörhead, something like this makes infinitely more sense. You get exceptionally clear and clean sound reinforcement that in this format will suit a duo or small ensemble with aplomb. As you grow, so can your Elements system, adding amps and cabs right up to a serious 3,600-watt full rock band rig. It certainly isn't cheap, but it's easy to carry, child's play to set up and it sounds the business. **G**

### The Bottom Line

**We like:** Modular design; looks ace; loud as pigs

**We dislike:** Must have a separate mixer; E-Connect is exclusive to HK; not cheap

**Guitarist says:** A superb-quality PA system that can grow with your needs

## HK Audio Elements Acoustics One

**PRICE:** £1,566 (E110SA £870, 2 x E435 mid/high cabinet £309 each, EP1 Pole Mount £78)

**ORIGIN:** Germany

**TYPE:** Full-range modular PA system

**POWER:** 600 watts

**FEATURES:** Modular, cableless design using 'E-Connect' system, mid/high filter on the E110SA, input sensitivity switch (+4/-10dB), input overload limiter with LED

**CONNECTIONS:** XLR/TRS in x 1, XLR through, Speakon speaker out for passive E110

**WEIGHT (kg/lb):** E110A 19/41.9; E435 2.35/5.2; EP1 0.8/1.8

**RANGE OPTIONS:** E110 sub (passive, £575), EA600 power amp (£479), EF45 base (£145). Various carry bags £24.99-£59.99

**DIMENSIONS:** E110A – 36 (w) x 48 (h) x 46 cm (d); E435 – 11 (w) x 46.5 (h) x 12cm (d); EP1 – 95 (h) x 3.5 cm (d)

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### Test results

Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★☆
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

**GUITARIST RATING** ★★★★★



Minimal controls onboard, as Elements is designed to be used with a mixer

