ADAM A8X Active Monitors | £1,298

With a new tweeter and cabinet design ADAM revamp their A8. ***Stuart Bruce*** investigates…

WHAT IS IT?

Near- to mid-field studio monitors with ribbon tweeters

CONTACT

Who: Adam Audio UK
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HIGHLIGHTS

1 Excellent high end response
2 Good stereo imaging
3 Very well constructed

SPECS

Specs
Tweeter: X-ART Ribbon Tweeter
Woofer: 8.5" Carbon / Rohacell / Glass Fibre construction
LF Amplification: 150W continuous
HF Amplification: 50W continuous

Controls
Input sensitivity : Off to +14dB
Tweeter Gain +/- 4dB
HF Shelf > 5kHz +/- 6dB
LF Shelf < 300Hz +/- 6dB

Data
Freq Response: 38Hz to 50kHz
THD: 90db/1m>100hz <=0,5%
Max Peak Acoustic output at 1m per pair: 120dB
SPL Sine Wave 100Hz to 3kHz @ 1m: 112dB

Dimensions:
255 x 320 x 400mm

Weight:
13kg

German monitor manufacturers ADAM Audio have built themselves a solid reputation with their range of active monitors all of which feature their very own ART Ribbon tweeters and midrange units. The new AX and SX ranges feature the X-ART, a further development of this design.

DAM well-made

The A8X is the biggest of the AX range and is intended as a near or midfield monitor. It is a two-way system with an 8.5" bass driver and ribbon tweeter and the cabinet is a twin-ported design, which looks calmly professional and well put together. My one surprise on taking them out of the box was that they felt much lighter than I expected. If you are going to be moving these around a lot, it could be of great benefit but somehow I expected them to be heavier.

Aside from the front-mounted power switch and master level knob all connectors and controls are situated on the back panel. ADAM have sensibly given the option of balanced and unbalanced audio inputs accessed via XLRs or phonos.

I connected using XLRs fed from my SPL monitor controller and the first thing I noticed was that in comparison to my other monitors the overall level felt a bit low. Even with the front-panel level controls set full they still came out a fair deal quieter than my Bryston powered KRK 7000Bs and my Sonodyne 100s. A few more dBs of gain wouldn't go amiss for those of us trying to balance between several pairs of speakers.

Mission control

There are three back-panel controls to help you tailor the sound to your own personal taste and to the needs of your room. These consist of a high and low shelf with variations of +/- 6dB and a separate tweeter level control with +/- 4dB to work with.

The crossover point is at 2.5kHz so the tweeter level gives an all but linear control of the frequencies above this point. The high and low shelves are set at 5kHz and 300Hz respectively so between the three controls, you have a fair amount of variation to suit your room and taste.

High to low

My first impression of the A8Xs was positive. I have used ADAMs in studios before and was always a bit suspicious of the high-end response, finding it too extreme and a little unreal especially in the very high frequencies. But these new X-ART tweeters sound stunning. Smooth and clear with fantastic detail and great imaging. Where previous incarnations have felt a little overblown, to me these are just right.

However, with every style of music I put through them, I kept coming back to the same conclusion. While the top sang out with beautiful detail, the mids and lows never really came into balance. I particularly felt that the mid-range really lacked any presence or bite. In comparison to all the other speakers I heard them against, they just didn't have enough detail in the 150Hz to 2kHz range.

The result is that, although very pleasant to listen to, everything comes out sounding very smooth and hi-fi. Balancing and EQing on them therefore proved to be hard work and in certain circumstances a little confusing. It felt to me that the extended low end that that 8.5-inch bass driver delivered and the bigger cabinet space somehow tipped the balance for the mids.

With the crossover set at 2.5k the bass driver needs to have a very good mid response and maybe it's just being asked to do too much. But those tweeters do sound great! We've loved the smaller units in the new AX range and they represent great value too but this big well-built two-way is all about the treble and bass. FM

FutureMusic VERDICT

BUILD
VALUE
EASE OF USE
VERSATILITY
RESULTS

Sturdy with excellent HF detail and imaging, let down by their mid range response.

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