

# TAPE OP

The Creative Music Recording Magazine

## **GLYN JOHNS**

*Rolling Stones, Who, Led Zeppelin, Faces*

## **MANNY MARROQUIN**

*Rihanna, Kanye West, John Legend*

## **UNKNOWN MORTAL**

## **ORCHESTRA**

*At home with Ruban Nielson*

## **ISHMAEL BUTLER**

## **& ERIK BLOOD**

*Shabazz Palaces: Spacey Hip-Hop*

## **MICHAEL BISHOP**

*On Classical Recording*

## **MUSIC REVIEWS**

*Robert Forster & Flying Saucer Attack*

## **GEAR REVIEWS**

Issue No. 109

Sept/Oct 2015



I won't get into the 12 Gauge mic, as Joel Hamilton did a great review already. What I will say is that it's totally different from the *Mini K47*. This, by the way, is a good thing. The pair of Roswells delivered quite a meaty sound. The toms spoke in a lovely manner, the "air" I look for on the snare was there, the imaging (using ORTF configuration) was great, and the cymbal articulation was wonderful. The *Mini K47* is a perfect choice for recordists who want the full picture of the drums in their overheads. As I listened to playback, I kept being reminded of the nice thickness you hear when using ribbons on overheads, but the *Mini K47* tracks didn't have that "squishy" sound that ribbons can impart. I think the *Mini K47* would also work great as a room mic because of its ability to tame the splashy sound of a brighter room.

I also used the *Mini K47* on electric guitar. I'm not a condenser-on-amps guy most of the time. I often feel like condensers bring out too much "tizzzzz" if there's any distortion involved. The Roswell had none of that sound, and it delivered a full tone that I quite liked, much like a dynamic mic would, but with the "speed" of a condenser. I was really impressed, and I found myself wishing we had more songs beyond the two we were doing that needed guitar work.

I haven't touched on the size and look of the mic. It's called the *Mini K47*, and it is small. It's a side-address mic with a nice, flat-black color to its body. It looks as if your typical LDC was shrunk down in size. I dig it. I can see how its small form would be an advantage in tight places.

The *Roswell Mini K47* is one of the best utility mics I've used. It sounds great on a number of sources, fitting them perfectly into a mix. It takes EQ well (when needed), and it seems happy to do anything you ask it to do. \$299 for a mic of this quality is beyond fair — it's a steal.

(\$299 direct; [www.roswellproaudio.com](http://www.roswellproaudio.com))

—Tony SanFilippo <Record@OxideLounge.com>

## ADAM Audio F7 active monitor Sub8 active subwoofer

Here at *Tape Op*, we've covered several of ADAM Audio's fine products, so I won't go on about introducing the company again. I will, however, remind you what they're known for: the employment and further development of physicist Oskar Heil's Air Motion Transformer (AMT), which is often referred to as a pleated ribbon transducer or a folded ribbon tweeter. ADAM's latest version of this technology is called X-ART (eXtended Accelerating Ribbon Technology), which can be found in all of their current loudspeaker designs, including the budget-priced F5 and F7 active monitors.

I've mixed four records on *Tape Op* Publisher JB's pair of ADAM A7 monitors [*Tape Op* #57]. Arguably, the ADAM A7 (and the updated A7X) have been the most popular and best-selling AMT-equipped monitors for pro audio. Out of the box, aside from its large front bass port, the F7 looks almost identical to its older brothers. On a quick first listen, it was like meeting an old friend you haven't seen (or in this case, heard) for a long time. ADAM's characteristically smooth highs, wide sweet spot, and excellent imaging are all achieved within this budget-friendly monitor.

Many manufacturers are embracing the space limitations of smaller project studios and desktop editing stations; ADAM follows suit with the F-series by incorporating a single, large frontal bass port into the enclosure design. In my opinion and experience, this layout really helps minimize bass frequency accumulation when space limitations prohibit placing monitors more than a foot or two away from your wall — which is exactly where I put the F7 pair: on the wings of my project studio desk.

At first, I did find the F7 to be slightly "tubby" sounding and lackluster in the 500–800 Hz range compared to similar-sized monitors placed in the same position. I tried different types of mechanical isolation between the desk and monitors, and also placed the F7s on speaker stands away from the wall in an open room. As time went on, the "tubby" character receded. The manual states that "the loudspeakers will take some break-in time to achieve optimum performance," but I didn't expect such an apparent change. I felt like a good 20 hours of playback was required before I was hearing the speaker's intended response. After three days, the monitors really opened up. Eventually, I settled on Auralex MoPads [*Tape Op* #30] for my monitor-to-desk isolation, and all was right in my world.

After placement was established, I "tuned" the monitors to my liking, using the rear panel controls. HF (5 kHz) and LF (300 Hz) shelving controls allow for ±6 dB of adjustment via teeny trim pots that require the use of a small screwdriver or "tweaker." This may seem frustrating at first, but I love that it's difficult to accidentally move these controls once set. In my room, a boost of the HF and a cut of the LF worked best. A larger knob allows input-level adjustments from fully attenuated to +6 dB of gain. Also on the back plate are a Neutrik Combo balanced input, an RCA unbalanced input, holes for a wall mount, an AC voltage selector (115 or 230 V), an IEC power-cable connector, a power switch, and an 80 Hz HPF toggle for operation with a subwoofer.

Without a subwoofer, the F7's low end is pretty impressive, considering its modest size and cost. I hear good tightness and a consistent, creamy representation of frequencies from about 60 to 250 Hz — even as I vary volume levels. At no time have I ever felt that the low end was misrepresented or overly hyped. As I expected, the F7's

# Tradition, tubes & transformers...

### Twin-Servo® Jensen™ 990 preamp

This is the real thing. Developed by industry guru Deane Jensen, the 'no compromise' Twin-Servo preamp combines two legendary Jensen 990 discrete op-amps with Jensen's finest input and output transformers to produce a response that ranges from 1Hz to 150kHz. Updated to fit inside a 500 series module enclosure, the Twin-Servo delivers a sonic clarity and low-end depth that is without equal.

### PowerPre™ mic preamp

The PowerPre is a 100% discrete mic preamp with an old-school Hammond™ broadcast transformer for ultra-warm tone. The Radial PowerPre features Accustate™ gain control for lowest noise at any setting, Vox Control for added breath or extra punch, a high-pass filter to eliminate resonance, a 10 segment LED meter display for easy readout and plenty of gain to handle any situation.

### PowerTube™ tube preamp

The PowerTube is an amazing class-A tube preamp that combines the natural harmonics of a 12AX7 with the sonic performance of a Jensen™ transformer. Inside, a charge pump delivers 140 volts to the tube for maximum headroom while the transformer yields Jensen's legendary Bessel curve. Features a high pass filter to eliminate resonance, an 'air' switch for extra top end and a 10 segment LED ladder for visual feedback.

*"The PowerPre is a must hear. I got great results, particularly in high transient situations where you can drive it hard for more transformer color. I bought one!"*  
~ Mix

*"The PowerPre is a fine example of a well designed, low-noise mic preamp that can give a bit of 'meat' or 'air' when needed. It may well be your preamp of choice."*  
~ Electronic Musician

*"The PowerTube promises 'tube magic'... retro tone and warmth... and this puppy succeeded. You won't find many options at this price point that deliver on this promise."*  
~ TapeOp

*"The Q4's two Mid bands include a Q setting narrow enough to go all Hendrix with and you can make superb Wah-wah effects with the low-frequency knob. Astonishingly wholesome and lovely!"*  
~ Resolution

*"Using the EXT, I was surprised at how quietly most pedals can perform, and this got me digging out some neglected curios which sounded stunningly clean and juicy."*  
~ Resolution

**jensen**  
transformers  
INSIDE

most shining traits are its buttery highs and excellent imaging. I like the HF shelf (5 kHz) boosted 3 dB, so I don't over-EQ snare drums and such; and everything above 4 kHz sounds really good to my ears. Incidentally, ADAM rates the F7's frequency response as 44 Hz – 50 kHz.

Over months of use, my F7 mixes translated very well, though even after sufficient break-in time, I caught myself pushing midrange-focused instruments more than usual — especially acoustic guitars. Going over previous mixes and other familiar material, my ears perceived the F7 to have a hair less midrange detail than monitors twice as expensive, and in my opinion, this is the only trait that reveals the F7's price-point.

The F7's small 12.5" × 9" × 10.5" enclosure is tough, hefty (20 lbs), and super sturdy; and the monitor can get markedly loud for its size. Class AB bi-amplification offers a peak 85 W to the 7" paper/fiberglass woofer and 55 W to its tweeter. On the front are green and red LEDs straddling the ADAM logo. Green indicates the amps are on, while dim red indicates standby mode, and green together with bright red indicates overheating. I tried like hell to get both LEDs to light, but my ears (and neighbors) couldn't take the volume.

The good folks at ADAM also sent along the Sub8, a compact, powered subwoofer designed for "small control rooms, desktops, mobile facilities, and post-production edit bays" — a great match for the F7 in a project studio environment. My past experience with subwoofers in a stereo mix environment hadn't been great, with the subwoofers never calibrated to my liking and adjusting/recalibrating them a big PITA. More often than not, they were way too obvious — in size and sound. So I spent nearly three weeks assessing the F7 pair before pulling the Sub8 out of its box.

With a small footprint (16" × 10" × 15") and a handy remote control to adjust crucial settings, ADAM addressed a lot of my prejudice towards subwoofers. Initial setup was quick and painless. With the F7's 80 Hz HPF engaged, it was pretty much a "plug and play" ready system. Rear-panel connectors include a pair each of balanced XLRs and unbalanced RCAs for input, as well as XLR and RCA outputs for driving a pair of satellites. There are pushbutton switches for an 85 Hz HPF for the satellites, subwoofer polarity, and auto-standby or continuous-on operation. (The hard-to-reach power switch is also on the back, but when the subwoofer is in auto-standby mode, I feel comfortable leaving its power switch on.) If your satellites lack a built-in HPF (and your monitoring system doesn't include bass management), you can feed your main stereo signal to the Sub8 first, and from the Sub8, drive your satellites with the 85 Hz HPF engaged on the Sub8. (Note that the Sub8 does not have a dedicated LFE-channel input.)

The included remote control for the Sub8 has four buttons for frequency up/down and volume up/down. These control the movement of the motorized knobs on the faceplate of the subwoofer, for input level (-60 to +6 dB) and cutoff frequency (50 to 150 Hz). It's really great to be able to tweak the frequency and volume of the subwoofer from your listening position. Both knobs also have an easy to see green LED indicator, so you can verify movement and position visually.

The Sub8's "Quick Start" guide goes a long way (with few words) towards initiating the "unSUBstantiated" (feel free to punch me in the face for using that word the next time you see me) with placement and setting recommendations. Some of us will be more comfortable running tones to calibrate, which I tried, but in the end, using my ears to tune the sub

and set levels gave me the best results. I settled on a cutoff frequency just below the F7's HPF and an input trim close to 0 dB — right about where ADAM suggested.

The Sub8 grooves really nicely with the F7, serving up a classy, "expensive" sound. With the subwoofer doing its work, the F7 satellites really get a chance to push the center image forward in a present, but never brash way. Though the difference was subtle, I preferred the focused energy from the F7 when utilizing its built-in 80 Hz HPF instead of the Sub8's 85 Hz HPF. I also tried the Sub8 with another pair of monitors with 7" drivers. With a little adjustment, I could nearly catch the same vibe, but to my ears, the F7 pairing was a better match.

Compact and affordable, with a combined price of \$1500 for a subwoofer and stereo satellites, the F7 and the Sub8 make a formidable project studio monitoring kit. The F7's X-ART tweeter and overall build-quality push it to the top of the budget monitor class, while the Sub8 definitely contributes to a robust and enjoyable listening/work environment.

(F7 \$349 street each, Sub8 \$799; [www.adam-audio.com](http://www.adam-audio.com))

—SM <[www.scottmchane.com](http://www.scottmchane.com)>

## H2 Designs MIYO portable USB DAC/ADC & headphone amp

At this point in history, there is simply no good reason that people aren't getting excellent sound out of their computers. It's obscene and absurd that computers don't come equipped with capable converters, clocks, line amps, and headphone amps; and it's even worse that so many people willingly accept this lame sound as the centerpiece of their listening and recording systems. We humans totally favor the visual

# Radial modules have the right stuff!



### Space Heater™ studio tube driver

The Space Heater 500 is a 12AX7 tube overdrive designed to bring loads of spice and character to your tracks. It features 3 voltage settings for slight harmonics, medium crunch or over-the-top distortion. A combination of high and low-pass filters let you focus the distortion when parallel processing and a Jensen™ transformer rounds out the output for the ultimate in smooth, natural tone.



### Q4™ state-variable parametric

The Radial Q4 is a state-variable class-A parametric equalizer with a 100% discrete circuit. This unique old-school design enables component level control over individual gain stages, eliminating the need for excessive tone robbing negative feedback. This makes the Q4 the most natural sounding EQ ever! Features include high and low shelving with parametric control over the low mid and high mid regions.



### EXTC™ guitar effects interface

The EXTC is a unique device that lets you interface high impedance guitar pedals with your recording system. It features easy access front panel ¼" connectors for quick set-ups, plus individual send and receive controls to optimize the signal path and a wet-dry 'blend' control. The effects loop is transformer isolated to eliminate buzz and hum caused by ground loops.



[radialeng.com/modules](http://radialeng.com/modules)

1588 Kebet Way, Port Coquitlam, BC V3C 5M5 tel: 604-942-1001  
\* Specifications and appearance subject to change without notice.