Adam A3X Monitors | £398

The A3X is the latest addition to Adam's range of studio monitors, promising big performance for a very small outlay. ***Dan 'JD73' Goldman*** tunes in

WHAT IS IT?

Adam's most compact nearfield monitor to date, with updated X-ART tweeter, designed with smaller studios, second reference and post-production in mind

CONTACT

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HIGHLIGHTS

1 Very compact and well built
2 Larger-than-life sound with excellent stereo imaging
3 Plenty of power and bass extension

SPECS

Speakers:
Tweeter Type: X-ART
Mid-Woofer: 4-inch Carbon Fiber

Amplifiers:
2x Type A/B (one for tweeter, one for woofer)
Amp Power (RMS / Music): 25W / 40W

Controls:
Input Sensitivity: -∞ to +14dB
Tweeter gain: ±4dB

General:
Input connectors: Analogue XLR (balanced) RCA (unbalanced)
Frequency response: 60Hz – 50kHz
THD: 90dB/1m > 100Hz ≤0.8 %
Max. peak: ≥106dB
Crossover frequency: 2.8kHz
Input impedance: 10kOhm
Magnetically shielded: No

Dimensions:
252 x 150 x 185mm

Weight:
4.6kg

Adam speakers have garnered a great reputation among studio bods over the past few years and, never ones to rest on their laurels, the company are continually seeking to improve their designs wherever possible. The A3X is no exception.

Straight out of the box, the compact design is a thing of utilitarian beauty. Built from MDF with a high-quality tapered plastic covering, these speakers look great and feel like they are cut from the same cloth as their more expensive Adam brothers.

Still, the most striking thing about Adam speaker designs is the X-ART (eXtended Accelerating Ribbon Technology) tweeter. Working much like the bellows of an accordion, the gold folded-ribbon tweeter is lauded for its fast transient response and wide dispersion, something that's most definitely corroborated by the A3X's excellent top-end performance and transient detailing. The new 'X' version of the tweeter has a higher frequency response than the old ART tweeter (now up to 50kHz) and also produces higher SPL levels, too.

Grand design

The A3X's active design utilises two 25-Watt RMS class A/B amplifiers (one for the mid driver and one for the tweeter) and there's plenty of power — the A3X is surprisingly loud for its size, but the overall character remains consistent when pushed. Even at low volumes, it's easy to hear right into the music and transient details are accurately conveyed.

Overall, the character is warm, clear and punchy, and there's a good amount of mid-range detail. In particular, the upper-mids and highs come across well, making it a joy to use for work on vocals, guitars and keyboards (that generally occupy this frequency area). The tweeter is bright and airy (there is a Tweeter Level dial round the back for increasing and decreasing the top-end if required) yet produces a well-rounded sound.

The mid/low-range carbon fibre cone does a great job of pushing air yet doesn't sound flappy (something that can be a problem with front-ported designs such as this). Low-end detail is a strong point of the A3X and, for a speaker that rolls off at 60Hz, the bass extension is deep and controlled. It feels like it goes a lot lower than it says on paper, but do be wary of it if you're making club music that needs clear low-end detail.

Control/connection-wise, the power switches are front-mounted for convenience, plus the volume controls (+/-14dB) can be linked so that either speaker's Volume control can turn down both speakers' volumes together – very handy for speeding up the production process. Input-wise, there are both phono (unbalanced) and XLR (balanced inputs).

Hard to fault

In action, there is little to fault with these speakers. They are musical, convey transients well, have plenty of top-end and low-end punch and the mids/lows are quite upfront, allowing you to really hear into reverb tails and basses alike. The A3X becomes even more appealing at the almost insanely low price of £398 for a pair!

At this price, the A3X is a real bargain, but do bear in mind it's not magnetically shielded, so you may experience interference problems. It is suitable for many mix applications including surround (though for serious low-end mixing you would need a sub) and are a great set of second reference monitors. All in all, Adam have produced a fantastic speaker that I can really see flying off the shelves. FM

FutureMusic VERDICT

BUILD
VALUE
EASE OF USE
VERSATILITY
RESULTS

An excellent speaker from Adam with a big, detailed sound that far exceeds its diminutive size.

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