

ARTist 3 review by InnerFidelity.com

In a new review, Steve Guttenberg from InnerFidelity.com had a close listen to our smallest multimedia speaker - the ARTist 3 - alongside an Emotiva airmotiv 4. Some excerpts can be found below.

[...] The X-ART has a much larger radiating surface area than a conventional dome tweeter, which is one of the reasons why it produces less distortion than dome tweeters. Unlike Emotiva and GoldenEar Technology's similar looking tweeters sourced from Chinese manufacturers, Adam Audio designs and hand builds its own tweeters in its Berlin factory. [...]

[...] Connectivity options are broader than what you get with most desktop speakers, there's RCA, XLR, and a USB 1.1 port that feeds a 48-kHz/16-bit DAC on the back panel, plus a 3.5 mm input upfront. [...]

[...] The little Adam ARTist 3 communicates musical energy with rare gusto; there wasn't a lot of head scratching go on here, I knew within a few minutes of plugging in the ARTist 3s I was going to thoroughly enjoy my time with them.

The sound was extremely transparent and pure, handily exceeding my Emotiva airmotiv 4 speakers, which the ARTist 3 superficially resembles. They're almost the same size, both are bi-amped, and both sport Heil-inspired tweeters. The ARTist 3 is a much better speaker, but it's also twice as expensive as the airmotiv 4. The ARTist 3 is a faster sounding, more highly resolved design. It's also better looking, thanks to its slick high-gloss finish.

On the Explorations in Space and Time all-percussion album the ARTist 3 took me back to the venue (I was there for the sessions). The subtle and high impact dynamic gradations of the drums were remarkable for a small speaker. The way the soundstage extends wider than the actual locations of the ARTist 3s is uncanny, image spaciousness and depth are excellent. The airmotiv 4 sounded smaller, dynamically compressed, and the texture of the sound was coarser. Its leaner tonal balance was less inviting. [...]



[...] I should note I had the treble turned down a notch on both ARTist 3 and airmotiv 4 speakers – my ears were 28 inches away from them – so flat can seem a tad bright. In any case, it's always nice to have the option to tweak the tonal balance to taste.

Which reminds me, there are times when high-resolution can sometimes be too much of a good thing on desktop systems, especially when you play iffy sounding YouTube videos, but the ARTist 3 was easy on the ears. A Dead Can Dance Frontier video sounded especially nice. The ARTist 3's sound via the USB input was more than acceptable, just lacking the resolution of the Halide DAC.

This 'n' that

I wished I had the Magnepan Mini Maggie desktop speakers (\$1,495/pair) here to compare, but I did not. I do have my six foot tall Magnepan 3.7s on the other side of the room, and those Maggies are something else again. The ARTist 3s still sound like boxes after all, but to put things in perspective, the Minis aren't self-powered, you need to buy a healthy amp to make them go, and the Minis can't be crammed up against a wall like the ARTist 3s can (of course, they'll sound better with some breathing room). So if you're keeping score the Mini Maggie is still the ultimate desktop speaker, but the ARTist 3 is considerably more practical and affordable. The airmotiv 4 ain't chopped liver and I still love it, but the ARTist 3 is in another league.

Steve Guttenberg, InnerFidelity.com / March 22, 2012

Link to full review:

<http://www.innerfidelity.com/content/adam-artist-3-desktop-speakers>