Tape Op

The Creative Music Recording Magazine

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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)

–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 *F7*s 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

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)
–SM <www.scottmcchane.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