

ADAM A7 NEARFIELD MONITORS

The Adam for the rest of us

by Craig Anderton

I don't like to review speakers, because past a point, you're dealing with quantitative rather than qualitative differences. To use an analogy, take two beautiful women. One has superb eye makeup, the other, exceptional hair styling. You can't really say one is more beautiful than the other — just that one has better eye makeup, while the other has better hair styling. And even that's in the eye of the beholder.

But to carry the analogy further, what intrigues me about Adams is they're like a woman who looks great *without* makeup. I first heard Adam speakers at the Frankfurt Messe many years ago, and they had a certainly quality that made me take notice. It's too easy to use words like "transparent," "detailed," or "open," because a lot of speakers do that. It was the high end: You know what an acoustic guitar sounds like when someone plays it in your room? The Adam's highs had a kind of "this is the *instrument*, not a reproduction of the instrument" sound that appealed to me instantly.

So I asked about the price. My credit card looked at me with shock and dismay. I filed Adam speakers under "maybe someday, when I'm rich." Well, someday is here, and you don't have to be rich. The A7s sell for under a grand per pair, but they sound like they cost a lot more.

Another Frankfurt story, this time from 2006: I had heard about the A7s, so I went to the Adam booth. They had a display with a bunch of their speakers, from the Big Guys to the Little Guys, with a switchbox for A-B comparisons. I heard that unmistakable Adam sound, and thought I'd check out how the A7s compared. So I asked the representative to please switch over to the A7s instead. "They *are* what you're hearing," he replied.

That did it.

THE SPECS

You're adults and know how to use computers, so go to the Adam website

for details. The short form is two-way active monitor, 50W amp per driver, some woofer voodoo, and Adam's proprietary tweeter.

That tweeter is responsible for what I consider the "Adam sound." The website explains how this works; to paraphrase, it squeezes air out like an accordion instead of pushing air out like a piston. Whatever;



I'm not sure I get the concept, but I can definitely hear it.

My only beef is that although there's a balanced XLR in, the unbalanced in is RCA. I know the tech reasons — you can't short out an in or out when plugging into an RCA — but I would have preferred a combi LXR+1/4" input.

APPLYING THE A7

I won't utter the usual speaker review cliché of "It revealed sounds I never heard before!" — because it didn't. But playing a variety of mixes through the Adams did highlight the *differences* between those mixes to a greater extent than other speakers. In other words, the Adams did

not impose their personality onto the mixes; the *mixes'* personalities imposed themselves on the Adams. The Adams just pass along the mix to your ears, without making value judgments, tarting it up, or dressing it down.

I've already described the high end, but the lows are surprisingly forceful and accurate for such a small speaker. The balance among highs, lows, and midrange sounds close to textbook-perfect; what you hear is what you mix, and while that can sometimes be unflattering, it also means that a mix that sounds good on the A7s will transport well.

In practice, I never had much of a problem with transportability. I used my knowledge of a set of speakers, and spectrum analysis as a reality check for when I didn't totally trust the speakers, to produce mixes that my clients felt were extremely transportable. But with the A7s, you don't have to *work* to create transportable mixes: They just happen.

CONCLUSIONS

Although I've met only a handful of people who didn't like Adams, I've met a ton of people who couldn't afford them. However, the A7 isn't a "lite" or "budget" version; it's a great speaker that, frankly, makes it hard to justify spending more. Granted, nearfield speakers in general have never been better, or more cost-effective. Still, even in a crowded field where the bar is set high, the Adam A7 sets the bar just that much higher. They're sweet, detailed, accurate, and affordable. Bingo. **EQ**

Product type: Nearfield monitoring speakers.

Target market: Project studios, higher-end home studios.

Strengths: What you hear is what you mix. Less expensive than previous Adams, with no drop in sound quality. Uncanny realism in the high end; tight low end.

Limitations: No 1/4" input for unbalanced (RCA only).

Price: \$999 per pair.

Contact: www.adam-audio.com