

Affordability meets clarity
in this new folded-ribbon-tweeter speaker

ADAM Audio A7 Nearfield Monitor



The box

The all-black look, with an extra-smooth fascia, fairly sharp edges, and the by now familiar square with slats near the top, where others have a round tweeter, make this an immediately recognizable member of the ADAM's family. The top corners are ever so slightly slanted back to aid treble dispersion. The 6.5" woofer has no grille and sits above a port hole off to the left and a panel with volume knob and power switch to the right. Power is indicated with this decade's favorite LED color—aqua blue.

Around back, at the bottom, are the 3-prong IEC AC socket and a user-switchable voltage selector. Above that is a substantial heat sink, above which we find the audio inputs—a balanced XLR (pin 2 hot) and an unbalanced RCA connector.

The footprint is modest, just 18 cm wide by 28 cm deep (about 7 x 11"), and the height is 33 cm (13"). The weight is given in the manual as 176 lbs—scary, ain't it? Actually it's 17.6 lbs (8 kg).

Setup

Setup is a breeze. The fairly small footprint should make it feasible to follow the recommendations in the manual—to form an equilateral triangle between speakers and listener's head, with the side of that triangle measuring between 1 and 3 meters (about 3–10 feet), and with the tweeters at ear level. I think that 3 meters is too far apart—to maintain fine detail in average rooms the 3' end of the suggested range will yield better results.

Play back some track of consistent volume, max out the mixer and turn up the notched volume knobs on the front of the A7. The first three or four notches seem to do little or nothing, but by notch four a quick increase of volume begins the rapid ramping up. The amps and speakers seem

to be well matched and very efficient—I can't imagine anyone ever getting near the +6 dB end of the knob's throw if the source has a reasonable gain structure.

Audio adjustments

ADAM Audio has included three controls to allow finessed integration of the A7 into listening environments that present special problems, like bass buildup near walls or in corners, or high-frequency exaggerations from unavoidable surfaces and such—or simply for the individual user's taste.

A shelving low-frequency eq allows for boost or cut by a full 6 dB (!) below 150 Hz. A shelving high-frequency eq yields cut or boost of 6 dB above 6 kHz. If that doesn't give you enough of a high, you can raise or cut the level of the tweeter's output by a full 4 dB with the third control.

The sound

After a day of sitting there and warming up, all powered up with nowhere to go, these fairly small boxes began to speak mightily when I subjected them to some tracks I like to use for speaker evaluation, and I was impressed on several levels. It's not a big sound, nor a deep sound, but it's a *coherent* and *consistent* sound that belies the size of the speakers nevertheless.

Much has been made in discussions on the Internet of the stated low end of 46 Hz (± 3 dB). I heard nothing special in that range. I had the speakers out in the open, in the center of a fairly large room, on single stands, 6' from the nearest side wall, and the bass I heard was just the way I like it for constant evaluation while working—lean, smooth, with no bumps in the low range, but not a deep big bass either. A lot of second harmonic, good definition, adequate attack but no "wow factor".

I find solo cello recordings to be helpful in evaluating lows and upper lows/lower mids—and the A7 did very well with Wispelwey's flawlessly played and recorded Bach solo suites—no mud, not

This recent addition to the A Series of ADAM Audio's powered near-field monitors is aiming squarely at the home studio where volume isn't everything but where good clear sound and manageable size and cost are everything.

As stated on several occasions in the past in these pages, ADAM Audio has taken the Air Motion Transformer folded-ribbon tweeter technology (credited to Oskar Heil in 1972) and built on it, basing an entire line of speakers on these principles, using the name A.R.T. (Accelerated Ribbon Technology). The company's website (see below) goes into considerable detail on the topic.

even in the low double-stops that can easily turn to mush on lesser systems, and lots of rosin and fingering detail.

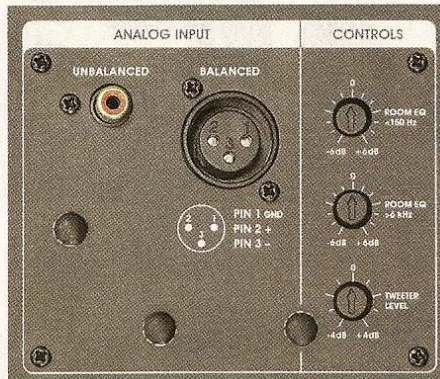
I then boosted the bass by the full available 6 dB, and promptly lost some definition and precision but gained predictable oomph that might impress clients and remind addicts of the dreaded "loudness" button of their favorite listening scenario.

Boosting the bass in that manner also did an injustice to the midrange. Before I boosted the bass, the mids were slightly forward in a good way, yielding much detail without smearing. Low-pitched singers' voices stood out even against fairly dense backgrounds, strummed guitars were easily discernable individually, and the cross-stick on the snare sounded tangibly wooden. With the bass boost turned on, that entire range took on a different quality, as would be expected when raising the left half of a smiley face. So while the boosted bass was not unattractive by itself, the balance of the system was in jeopardy.

The highs, too, are best left alone unless overwhelmingly pressing matters require a change. At zero settings of the treble eq and the tweeter gain control, the A7 has a delightfully clear and open high end. I asked my cat if the factory-claimed 35 kHz top end was audible but got no answer, so I'll defer to other

creatures who might wish to testify. (No doubt somebody on the Internet will soon do us the honors.)

The tweeter, at reasonable listening volume, passed the triangle (distortion) and sibilance ("I know it's in the track and need to hear it") tests with flying colors. Strings sound silky, and brass bites. Maybe with too much openness for Aunt Mollie's favorite Serenade for Strings CD



during her afternoon nap—these are not "prettifying" speakers, they show highs where highs are present, but no harshness gets added where harshness wasn't there to begin with.

Imaging is satisfactory—better at closer range than from too much distance. All bets are off when the controls are maxed

out, especially the treble in conjunction with the tweeter's gain control. The box ceases to be an A7 and it can become a hissing monster, so—as the manual wisely warns—"this will produce a considerable change in the sound characteristics, and should be used with caution[...]"

All in all

This is a box that yields excellent sound throughout the audio spectrum, in a smooth and open tonality with good balance overall. The overall sound is in keeping with the size of the cabinet—not pretending to be huge and deep, but the bass that you hear is precise and useful for accurate work. I could work with these in a smaller room.

Add a sub (like ADAM's new \$699 Sub8) if impressing clients or convincing collaborators that their work is ready for bass-heavy playback systems is important in your studio. But you'll find that you'll get the most out of the A7 if you leave its controls at zero and the volume at modest levels—your mixes will be balanced and translatable. ➔

Price: \$999/pair

More from: ADAM Audio USA, 31238 Via Colinas, Unit D, Westlake Village, CA 91362. 805/413-1133, www.adam-audio.com.

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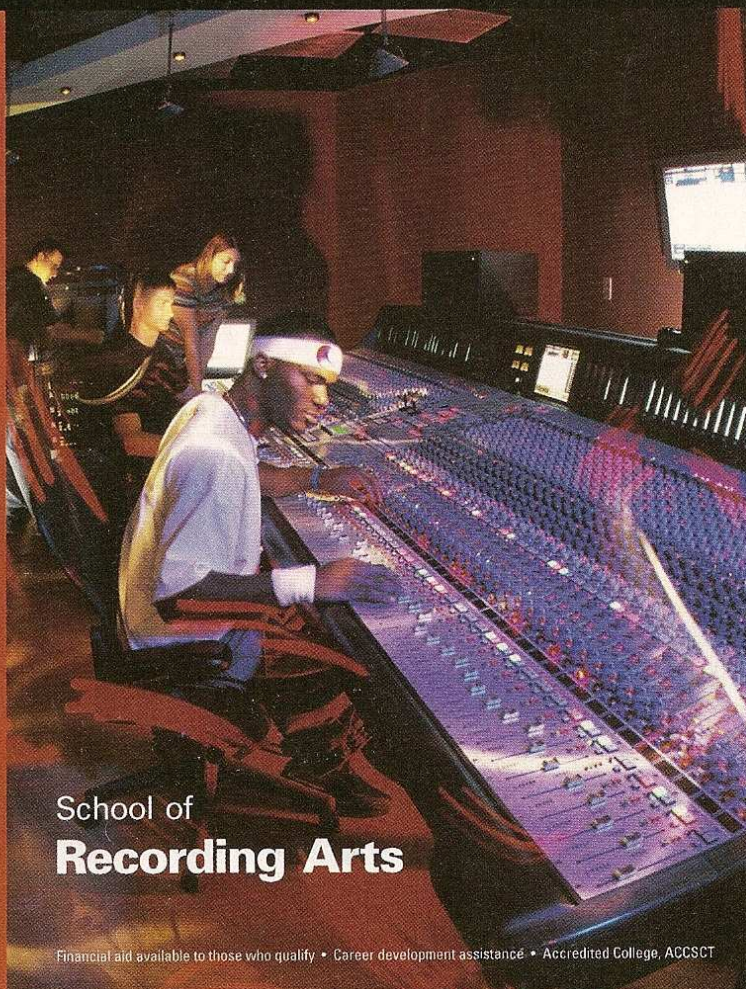
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