

WHAT HI★FI? SOUND AND VISION

ADAM Audio Tensor Gamma

ADAM Audio is likely to be a new name to most people.

That's no surprise considering the German speaker specialist has spent its first 10 years concentrating on conquering the pro world, where it's had a great deal of success.

ADAM stands for Advanced Dynamic Audio Monitor, and the Gamma has no problem living up to such a grand title. This is no 'me-too' product, as even a cursory scan of the spec sheet proves.

The most obvious technical highlights are the use of ribbon treble and midrange drivers. These have folded diaphragms that work like a concertina to move air.

ADAM claims this gives improved coupling to the air, resulting in better detail and dynamics. We wouldn't argue.

The mid/bass and rear-firing bass unit are more conventional. Even so, their cones are made of a Nomex/Kevlar sandwich to gain well-damped rigidity, once again to improve resolution and punch.

Other technology of note includes a complex cabinet construction, which uses sand as damping material, and the inclusion of no less than four 250W digital power amplifiers per speaker.

Finish and build are first-class.

Once out the box you're greeted by a bold, but surprisingly unobtrusive design. Build quality is excellent, while positioning is easy, thanks to the speaker's unfussy nature and built-in equalisation.

Properly set-up, these active towers are extraordinary. Obviously you'll need an appropriate source and preamp – we used our reference Naim CD player and Bryston preamp, the latter swapped with Audio Research's LS 17 to judge compatibility.

The Gammas are incredibly transparent to the system's electronics. You'd better like what the rest of your set-up does, because these speakers will only highlight its character.

The speaker's presentation changes so dramatically in response to partnering kit that it's easier to analyse the source, preamp and cables than it is to isolate the ADAM's contribution.

In the end it's this transparency that sets these floorstanders apart. They produce as clean and detailed a sound as we've heard, and they combine that with wide-ranging dynamics and a bass that digs deep without dragging.

Play The Dark Knight OST and these towers create a beautifully layered sound. This disc is one of the most demanding we've heard, yet they handle it with almost arrogant ease.

Low frequencies are a remarkable combination of power, precision and speed – most rivals sound flustered in comparison.

Move up the frequency range and things stay impressive.

The ribbon drivers integrate seamlessly and produce a sound of class-leading clarity. Imaging is particularly impressive, with vocalists positioned firmly and with substance.

Usually speakers as neutral as these sacrifice qualities such as timing and dynamics, but not in this case. These ADAMs kick hard with Outkast's Hey Ya!, delivering masses of enthusiasm and drive.

As you might have gathered, we're bowled over by these speakers. They combine insight with power, dynamics with rhythmic drive and deep, deep bass with ease of positioning.

That spread of talents is unheard of, even at this kind of money. If ADAM's other products are this good, other high-end speaker companies should worry.

This is an astonishing debut for ADAM Audio. The Gammas are one of the most impressive speakers we've heard in the last decade



For

Breathtaking combination of transparency, muscle and drive; room friendly despite size; excellent build; price includes 2kw of power amplification

Against

Transparency puts the spotlight on the rest of the system. It had better be good