

# REVIEWS



## ADAM PROFESSIONAL AUDIO A7

### Big sound in a little package.

By Eli Crews

Over the past few years, I've heard a lot about ADAM studio monitors, but they seemed a little beyond my price range. With the A7 model, ADAM has introduced its first self-powered monitors for under \$1,000 a pair, putting them well within reach of most project studios—exactly what a lot of engineers have been waiting for.

The A7 has two integrated amplifiers—one for the tweeter and one for the woofer—each supplying 80W of RMS power. The crossover frequency is 2.2 kHz.

The A7 is similar in size to other close-field monitors, but it stands out in a crowd visually (see Fig. 1). The top front corners are beveled to reduce surface reflections from the tweeter, giving the monitors a looming, sci-fi look. Instead of a dome tweeter, the A7 has a small, slatted grille with what looks like yellowed air-filter material nesting behind it. This is the unique Accelerated Ribbon Technology (ART) tweeter, which, according to a thorough but somewhat opaque explanation on

ADAM's Web site, is four times as efficient at moving air than the average metal dome tweeter. That may help explain how the A7 can reproduce frequencies up to 35 kHz ( $\pm 3$  dB).

The A7's 6.5-inch woofer is striking as well, with a Rohacell/Carbonfibre cone that has the appearance of black tweed. Rounding out the front of the monitor are a power switch, an input gain control, and a round bass-reflex port.

The input gain control on the review units is dome shaped, with a little oval dimple indicating where the knob is set. The control has a range from  $-\infty$  to +6 dB. Although aesthetically pleasing, this control isn't very precise—it's tough to figure out where the oval should lie relative to the gain markings surrounding the pot, making it difficult to get the same setting on a pair of monitors. However, ADAM says that the newer units have a more utilitarian cylindrical knob.

#### GUIDE TO EM METERS

- 5 = Amazing; as good as it gets with current technology
- 4 = Clearly above average; very desirable
- 3 = Good; meets expectations
- 2 = Somewhat disappointing but usable
- 1 = Unacceptably flawed

Specifications tables for EM reviews can be found at [www.emusician.com/specs](http://www.emusician.com/specs).



FIG. 1: The A7's diminutive size belies its large sound and great depth of field.



On the rear of the monitor are an XLR and RCA audio input, a standard IEC power cable receptacle, and a hefty heat sink. Small recessed pots let you tune the speaker to your control room. The low shelf has a corner frequency of 150 Hz, the high shelf is set at 6 kHz, and each knob gives you  $\pm 6$  dB of active EQ. There is also a control for the tweeter level, which lets you cut or boost its amplifier's gain by 4 dB. ADAM recommends using this as a last resort only, because it matches the woofer and tweeter levels in its Berlin factory. (Some of the A7's parts are manufactured in Singapore.) Nonetheless, the tweeter control is there

if you need more or less high end than the high-shelf control can accommodate.

The EQ and tweeter gain controls themselves are a tad flimsy. Again, it's hard to tell exactly where the arrow (which is adjustable with a small flat-head screwdriver) points, because the pots are a little crooked in their housing and the detents are too close together.

### As Heard on TV

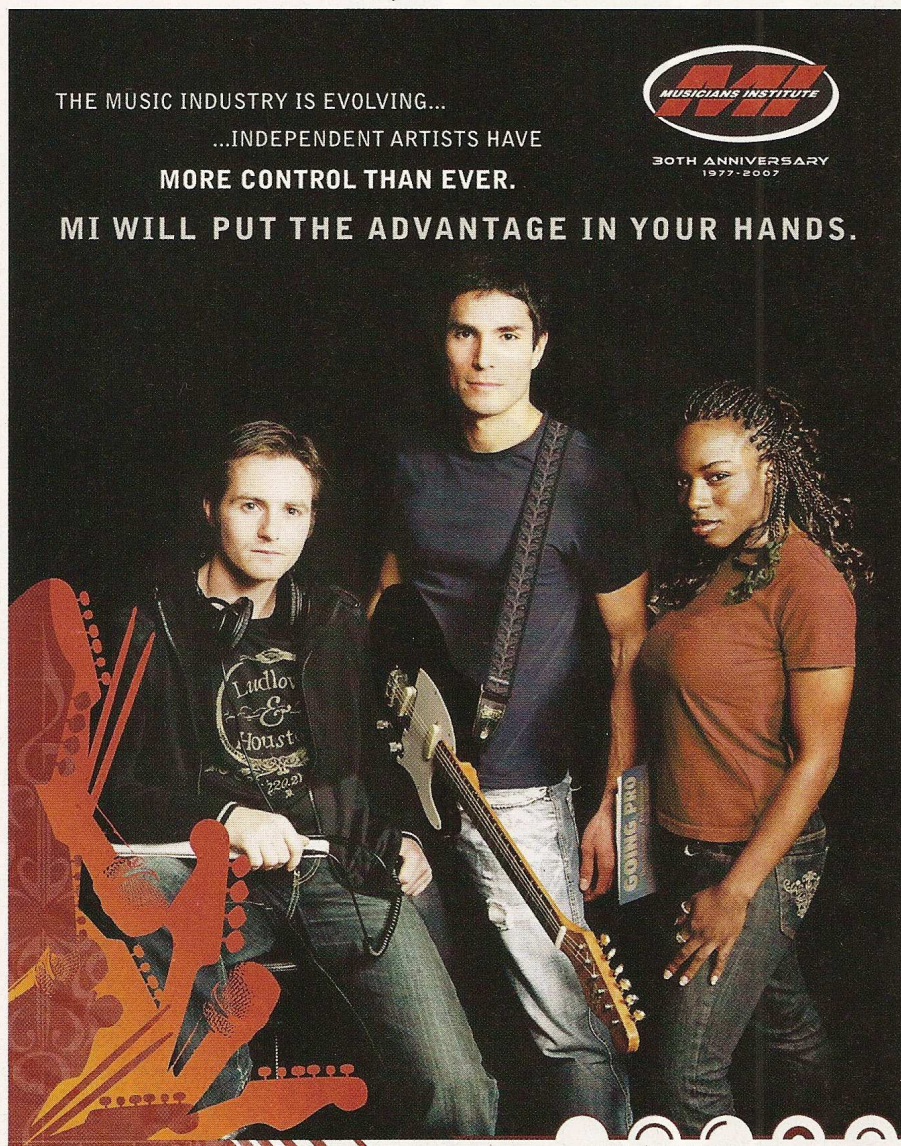
In my studio I compared a pair of A7s with my Bag End M6s, and right away I noticed the A7's clarity, depth, and tight bottom end that I've heard people raving about. (I also have a pair of Genelec 1030As in my studio, but I removed them in order to put the A7s in my control room's sweet spot.) Next to the M6s, the A7s had slightly more treble and a little less energy in the high-mid region, which served as a nice complement when comparing mixes between the two.

To hear the A7s in a different room, I took them to Philo TV, a postproduction house in San Francisco where I also work. With the help of engineers Christian Hanlon and George Sakellariou (who uses a different brand of ribbon-tweetered monitors), I A/B'd them against the studio's set of 1030As.

The three of us compared the two sets of monitors using tones, pink noise, and our favorite records, and we spent a couple of weeks using the A7s to mix projects destined for television. Because

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#### PRODUCT SUMMARY

### ADAM PROFESSIONAL AUDIO A7

powered monitor  
\$499.50 each

AUDIO QUALITY	4
VALUE	4

RATING PRODUCTS FROM 1 TO 5

**PROS:** Clear, open sound. Extended frequency response, especially for a small speaker. Easy to monitor on for long periods of time.

**CONS:** Controls are imprecise.

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the commercials we worked on had a good deal of dialog, this experience gave me a very good sense of how the A7s work for mixing both music and voice.

## The A7 monitors, frankly, made the added treble more listenable.

One of our first conclusions was that the A7 has a deeper soundstage than the 1030A. The 1030A seemed to add extra compression to the material, while the A7 let the dynamic range breathe in a way that extended the three-dimensional imaging much more. The A7 pair also gave me a very strong sense of the center image, even though they were physically farther apart in the studio than the 1030As. It felt like the sweet spot, where everything comes together phase-wise between the two monitors, was nice and wide on the A7s.

Our main impression was that the A7 doesn't sound as if it has nearly as much high-end reproduction as the 1030A. However, the benefit is that the A7's high end sounded smoother, which made long periods of listening to them more pleasurable. Because we

were mixing for TV, it was essential to have the mixes turn out bright, and the A7s, frankly, made the added treble more listenable.

But the name of the game when it comes to mixing is translation—how good your mix sounds on a variety of real-world playback systems, such as TV speakers, home-stereo systems, earbuds, computer speakers, and car stereos. The mixes I did

on the A7s passed the car test, the MP3 test, and the home-stereo test remarkably well.

### Up and ADAM

Choosing a pair of studio monitors is a very personal decision that can be made only by auditioning all of the available flavors. That said, you would be hard-pressed to find a better speaker at this price point. (The A7 also comes with a two-year warranty.)

If you're looking for a great-sounding monitor that lets you dig deep into your mixes, give the A7 a listen. You just might like what you hear.

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*Eli Crews records at his studio, New, Improved Recording ([www.newimprovedrecording.com](http://www.newimprovedrecording.com)), in Oakland, California.*

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