



# ADAM A3X

Following ADAM's revision of the A5 and the A7, two new active monitors join the AX Series. Huw Price tests the A3X.

## KEY FEATURES

- Woofer: 4.5-inch diameter with 1-inch voice coil
- Cone material: carbon fiber
- Tweeter: X-ART
- Input sensitivity: up to +14dB
- Tweeter gain: ±4dB
- Frequency response: 60Hz–50kHz
- Weight: 4.6kg
- Dimensions: 252 x 150 x 185mm
- 5-year warranty

## A3X

Manufacturer **ADAM**

Price **£429 each**

Contact **ADAM Audio 01992 525670**

Web **www.adam-audio.com**

The A3X we're reviewing this month is ADAM's smallest monitor ever. It's designed for any environment where space is limited and it's also recommended for connection directly to computer soundcards or digital interfaces in mixer-less setups. Two onboard 25-watt amplifiers power the drivers and the front baffle has dual ports for a low-frequency response that reaches down to 60Hz.

The rear-panel input connections include a balanced XLR and unbalanced RCA jacks. There's a tweeter gain control with a -4dB to +4dB range and a 0dB centre indent. Each A3X also has Stereolink connects that link two A3X speakers together. This allows one to be the 'master' and the other the 'slave', so the overall level of the system can be adjusted from either volume control.

## Drive time

As always, the drive units are of particular interest to us. The woofer has a carbon fibre cone with a diameter of 4.5 inches and a 1-inch voice coil. The tweeter is arguably even more interesting because all of the AX-Series models are equipped with the new X-ART tweeter, which is based on the original version of the legendary Accelerating Ribbon Technology.

By comparison to the original version, the X-ART tweeter is 4dB more efficient, handles an extra 3dB of maximum sound pressure level and the upper frequency response has increased to 50kHz. So, your dog will really enjoy those upper partials, even if you won't...

**THE OVERALL FEEL IS EFFORTLESS AND SOLID, WITH A SURPRISING DEGREE OF WEIGHT IN THE BASS END.**

ART stands for Accelerated Ribbon Technology and it's based on an 'Air Motion Transformer' invented by Dr Oskar Heil back in 1972. A folded diaphragm squeezes air in and out in response to an alternating electrical current. This apparently offers much greater efficiency than piston drivers as well as a faster response, making for improved transients.

One of the things we like best about ADAM monitors is the way they have power switches and volume controls on the front panel. This is so much easier and more convenient that it's a mystery why this arrangement hasn't yet become industry-standard.

## Vibrant bass

Although they're small, the size of the audio image belies their size. The overall feel is effortless and solid, with a surprising degree of weight in the bass end. There is perhaps an extremely subtle lift towards the lower reaches of the A3X's frequency range, but that

helps bass lines bowl along nicely and it's nowhere near as pronounced or obvious as it is on some small-box monitors we can think of.

Left/right imaging is fairly impressive, with a deeper than average front-to-back sound stage. We also found that the width of the image was ample, even with the A3Xs closer together than our usual nearfield setup. Again, this is good news if space in your studio room is at a premium.

As often seems to be the case with ADAM monitors, something odd happens at around 80Hz. It's a vibration that sounds like a breathy rattle, which is commonly known as 'port chuffing'. Fortunately, with most acoustic or rock material it's barely noticeable.

ADAM's technical department has told us that this must be expected with small and medium-size front-ported cabinets if you want a reasonably flat and extended LF response. They prefer this approach to engineering in a bass bump to create a false impression of deep bass for more 'innocent' listeners.

Although they're used for all genres of music, ADAM monitors are designed with classical music in mind, in which sustained high-intensity signals of 80Hz and below are rarely a feature. So we're

inclined to accept ADAM's reasoning, with the proviso that you should consider whether the A3X's are suitable for your musical interests. Foam port plugs are available that can cure the turbulence at the expense of some bass or you could consider using the A3Xs with a subwoofer. **MTM**

## SUMMARY

### WHY BUY

- Power/volume controls at front
- Five-year warranty
- Stereolink
- Solid imaging
- Vibrant, well-controlled bass

### WALK ON BY

- Odd bass resonance
- No bass response switching

## VERDICT

ADAM's trademark open sound quality in its smallest ever cabinet with 50 watts of onboard amplification.



## MEASURING UP

The Genelec 6010A and 5040A system comprises two small speakers (£199 each) and a compact subwoofer (£399) with 24 watts per side and some sensibly thought-out EQ adjustments. Blue Sky's EXO desktop monitoring system (£294) also has a remote hub to control volume and bass level. The M-Audio Studiophile CX5 has 90 watts of power per side with a silk dome tweeter, a 5-inch Kevlar woofer and bass response switching.