

PRO AUDIO REVIEW



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STUDIO MONITORS



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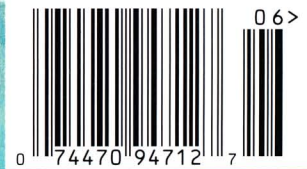
- ADAM S4U-A Ribbon Monitor
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ADAM S4V-A Ribbon Studio Speaker

BY JOHN GATSKI

In the November 2001 issue of *Pro Audio Review*, I reviewed the made-in-Germany ADAM S3-A powered monitor and gushed all over it - with its dual 7.5-inch woofers and folded A.R.T. ribbon

tweeter technology.

The S4V-A reviewed here, priced at \$6,800 per pair, is a larger speaker than the S3-A with a single 11-inch Hexacone woofer and a folded ribbon midrange, as well as a folded ribbon tweeter. According to ADAM, a folded ribbon has a larger acoustically-effective area of the driver, which offers more dynamic output, while maintaining excellent dispersion properties.

Versus the S3-A, the larger S4V-A speaker makes an excellent mid or far-field monitor for large control rooms, mastering suites and other high resolution, full-bandwidth listening uses where you want more bass.

FEATURES

The S4V-A powered monitor includes Class A/B discrete amp sections for each of its three drivers, with 150 watt amps for the high and mid folded ribbon drivers and 300 watts powering the Hexacone woofer. The cabinet, which measures 25.6-inches tall by 13.7-inches wide by 14-inches deep, is tapered on the sides for better horizontal dispersion, according to the company.

The speaker features conveniently locat-



ed front panel gain and EQ controls. They include overall input sensitivity (+, - 10 dB), tweeter gain (+, - 4 dB), midrange gain (+, - 4 dB), and shelving filters at 6 kHz and 150 Hz (+, - 6 dB). There also is a front panel-mounted, power switch.

Around back are a master power switch, IEC power cord receptacle and a balanced XLR input (would be nice to have an unbalanced input as well for extra flexibility). The speaker weighs in at about 60 pounds each.

Specifications included a claimed frequency response of 28 Hz-35 kHz, +, - 3 dB. Crossover point is 700 Hz (mid driver) and 2,800 Hz (tweeter).

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Fast Facts

Applications:

Studio, post production, broadcast production, mastering

Key Features:

Three-way; 10-inch Hexacone woofer; folded ribbon midrange and tweeter drivers; triamped (150 watts for high and mid drivers, 300 watts for the woofer); adjustable front-panel controls

Price:

\$6,800 per pair

Contact:

ADAM Audio USA at 805-413-1133, www.adam-audio.com.

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this could be fixed by more careful sub placement and phase adjustment.

Piano: Clear, well defined, not tubby. Slightly edgy or metallic in the midrange.

Drums and kick drum: Very good impact.

Cymbals and percussion: Smooth, with extended high frequencies.

Acoustic guitar: Clear, natural, palpable.

Vocal: Natural.

Sax: Mostly natural but seems to lack body or warmth. This could be fixed by resetting the tone controls.

Electric guitar: Lots of edge or "bite." Not puffy in the lower mids.

Strings, brass and woodwinds: Slightly forward, hard or metallic.

The stereo imaging was razor sharp and

depth was well reproduced. These are finely detailed speakers which reveal the microstructure of transients and reverberation. Listening fatigue was low, but I was a bit annoyed at the forward, slightly hard-edged sound. At least this characteristic tends to prevent the user from creating harsh mixes. In fact, mixes done on the Genelec system translated well to other speakers.

SUMMARY

The Genelec PowerPak system response is very wide range and flat except for a slight-but-audible midrange emphasis between 1,000 and 5,000 Hz. System distortion is extremely low and transient response is exceptional. The frequency response can be adapted to any environ-

ment. What's more, the system can be set up in a variety of configurations.

Genelec's superbly engineered PowerPak — five 1029As and a 7060A subwoofer - is an excellent, compact surround monitoring system.

Bruce Bartlett, a regular Pro Audio Review contributor, is a technical writer, a recording engineer and an audio journalist. He is the author of Practical Recording Techniques 3rd Edition, published by Focal Press.

REVIEW SETUP

NHT Pro A20 monitors; Sony PCM-R300 DAT recorder; Philips CD 910 compact disc player; Goldline TEF-20 sound analyzer; Crown CM-150 measurement microphone.

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IN USE

I set up the S4V-As on metal Apollo speaker stands that put the tweeter at ear level. They were placed about eight feet from the rear wall, toed in slightly. The listening position was moved from as close as four feet out to eight feet to ascertain the optimum listening point.

Sources included a Fostex DV-40 DVD-RAM recorder with material recorded at 24-bit 192 kHz, a Sony SCD-777ES SACD/CD player, a Panasonic RP91 DVD-Audio player. Separate converters used in the evaluation included, Benchmark Media DAC-1 24-bit/96 kHz sampling D/A and Bel Canto DAC-2 24-bit/192 kHz upsampling D/A.

The sources were routed through either a Legacy High Current monitor preamp, Sunfire Cinema Grand III processor preamp or a Midas Venice 160 console. All interconnects were made with Alpha-Core and Hosa solid silver cables.

Material included high-resolution recordings of acoustic guitar and voice, previously mastered material on CD and a host of SACDs and DVD-As, including some recent SACD recordings by Tom Jung.

After some noise measurements and initial listening, I tweaked the front panel controls a bit to tailor the speaker to my room: lowering the midrange gain down -1 dB and the 150 Hz EQ down -2 dB.

My first impression of the S4V-A, with its bigger box, was its increased bass expression over the smaller enclosure S3-A. I also noticed

that the ribbon midrange made voices sound tighter and, in conjunction with the ribbon tweeter, made voices pop out of the mix versus normal dome tweeters of other speakers. Hence, this speaker should be more analytical for vocal recordings. Sibilance, for example, is more noticeable on ribbons.

My high-resolution recordings of several Martin guitars (D-35, 000-28 Eric Clapton model) and a Gibson Advanced Jumbo, revealed the same accurate shimmer that the S3As showed of those instruments. The airy plucks of the D-35 sounded like the real thing.

Recordings with loud deep bass showcased the larger box's extra low-end, and the Hexacone woofer held up well at levels of well over 100 dB. No problems filling up a

room with clean, deep bass. Kudos to ADAM for front-porting the speakers to avoid the exaggerated mid-bass that can result from rear ports when located too close to boundaries.

enough to withstand the perils of long-distance UPS shipping. When I received the pair, one speaker's corner had been bashed in - as a corner of the box was clearly mashed. We had to order new boxes to safely ship the speakers back. At this price point, ADAM should crate the speakers or, at least, move up to a beefier box to keep them safe during transport.

SUMMARY

The S4V-A allows me to second my very positive impression of the ADAM speaker company. The German-designed and engineered speakers, with their unique folded ribbon diaphragms, are excellent choices for higher resolution audio monitoring. The

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On all recordings, I found the speaker sounds best at a midfield distance of five to eight feet from the listening position. The midrange does not sound as good up close.

I liked the sound of ADAM's power amplifiers. They are not brittle like other powered speakers I have heard. As I have said before, I still prefer separate amps and passive speakers, but with high-end speakers, such as ADAM, Genelec and PMC making strides in speaker amp technology/driver design, the difference is narrowing.

My complaints about the ADAM speaker are really just quibbles: the lack of the aforementioned unbalanced input jack for extra connection flexibility and inadequate packing material for shipping.

Because of the substantial weight of the speaker, the original box is not strong

S4V-A, in particular, with its ribbon midrange sounds more revealing on vocals than other powered speakers I have tried. Of course, these speakers will cost you a big chunk of change, but so will quality separate amps and speakers.

As always, audition before you buy to make sure that this (or any speaker) fits your sonic needs.

John Gatski is publisher of Pro Audio Review.

REVIEW SETUP

Fostex DV-40 DVD-RAM recorder; Alesis MasterLink recorder/player; Sony SCD-777ES SACD/CD player; Panasonic RP91 DVD-A player; Benchmark Media DAC-1, Bel Canto DAC-2 D/A converters; Legacy High Current monitor preamp; Sunfire Cinema Grand III processor preamp; Midas Venice 160 console; Alpha-Core and Hosa solid silver cables.

ADAM S4V-A SPEAKER

Plus

- + Unique driver technology
- + Good power amps
- + Front panel controls
- + Sound quality
- + Strong bass

Minus

- No unbalanced jack

Score:

The powered ADAM S4V-A offers up the company's highly resolute folded ribbon driver sound with an extra kick of bass.