

aig

audio ideas guide

Spring/Summer 2006, Vol. 22 #4 \$6.95

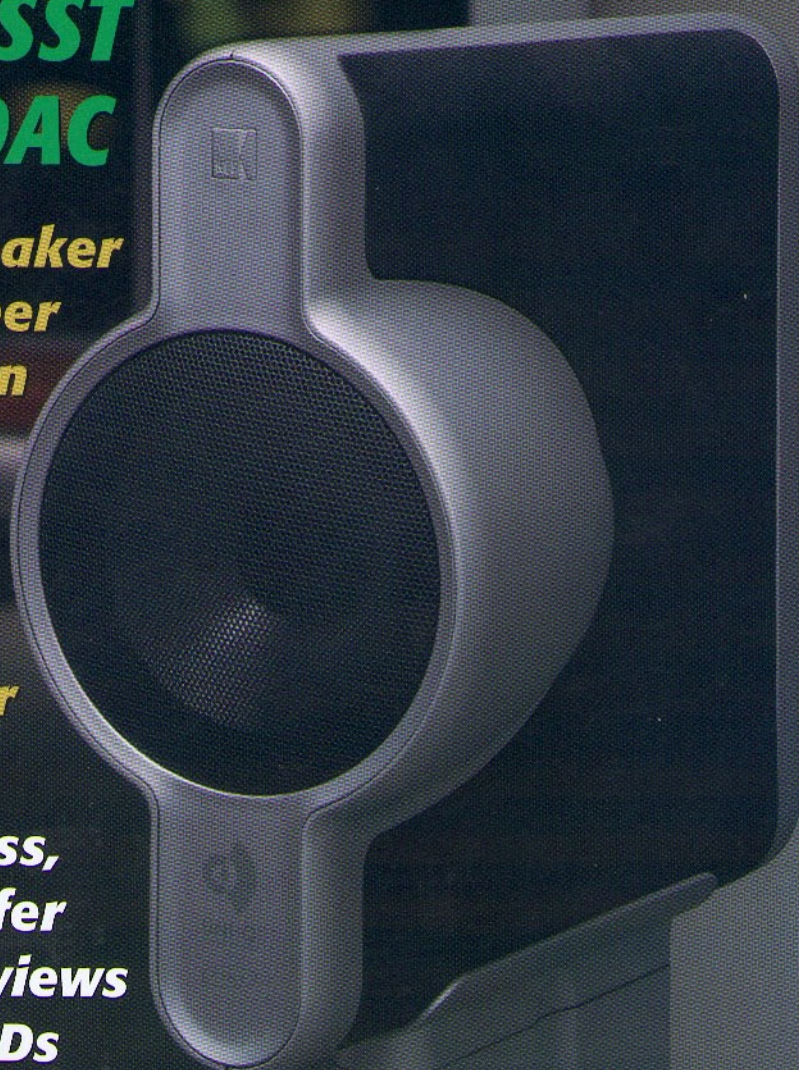
***KEF's Stylish Surround System:
DVD Receiver, 2 Speakers & Sub
Sensational SIM2 720p HD Projector
Bryston B100-DA SST
Integrated Amp/DAC***

***QUAD's First Dynamic Speaker
Sinclair's Brighton: A Super
High Performance Bargain
Andrew Marshall's Audio
Ideas Columns Return
First Look: Torus Power
Filter/Protection System
Fanfare FTA-100 Hot Tuner***

***Special Music Features:
SuperSounds: Alison Krauss,
Marian McPartland, Jennifer
Warnes. Reviews
of CDs, SACDs***



www.audio-ideas.com www.audioideas.on.ca



Loudspeakers

Adam High End Series Compact Monitor

Size: 17"H x 9"W x 11 1/2"D

Sugg: Retail: \$6500 pr

Manufacturer: Adam Audio GMBH,
Lobekstrasse 36, 10969, Berlin Germany
Canadian Distributor: Diffusion Audio,
121 Ch. Champagne, CP 142, St-Saveur QC
J0R 1R2 (450) 227-3818 FAX 227-9477

This loudspeaker, from a well known European professional manufacturer, certainly ranks as the most expensive 2-way bookshelf model in our experience, but is immaculately finished in light Maple veneer, and of unique construction. The *Compact* is described by the maker as a "no-compromise small high-end loudspeaker that incorporates the revolutionary A.R.T. tweeter and a 7" Hexa Cone woofer." I'll say more about these drivers and the cabinet materials and construction below.

It is the company's first entry into the North American consumer market, and the least expensive model of a group of loudspeakers that utilize the ART tweeter designed by the famous Oskar Heil, and refined by chief Adam designer, Klaus Heinz. As noted, fit and finish are exemplary, the rear panel (as shown) indicating the high quality biwire gold plated 5-way binding posts and flawless veneered surface. The heavily braced wood cabinet is fronted by a "25mm thick Aluminum honeycomb plate with very high stiffness (Youngs Modulus). This couples the driver[s] much better to the cabinet and as a result, a much better impulse response, improved clarity and better dynamics are obtained." This baffle is coupled to the wood cabinet through an sealing energy absorbing gasket that damps surface vibration.

The *Adam Compact* frequency response measurements are, as they say in the news, "uneventful", but deceptively so: because there seems to be so little going on, they indicate more than anything else, superb acoustic design. Midrange response between 150 and 1500 Hz is ruler flat, with a smooth attenuation below, down 4 dB at 100 Hz, and 7 dB at 60 Hz. This is not outstanding bass extension for a ported design, but leads to other benefits, as I'll outline below.

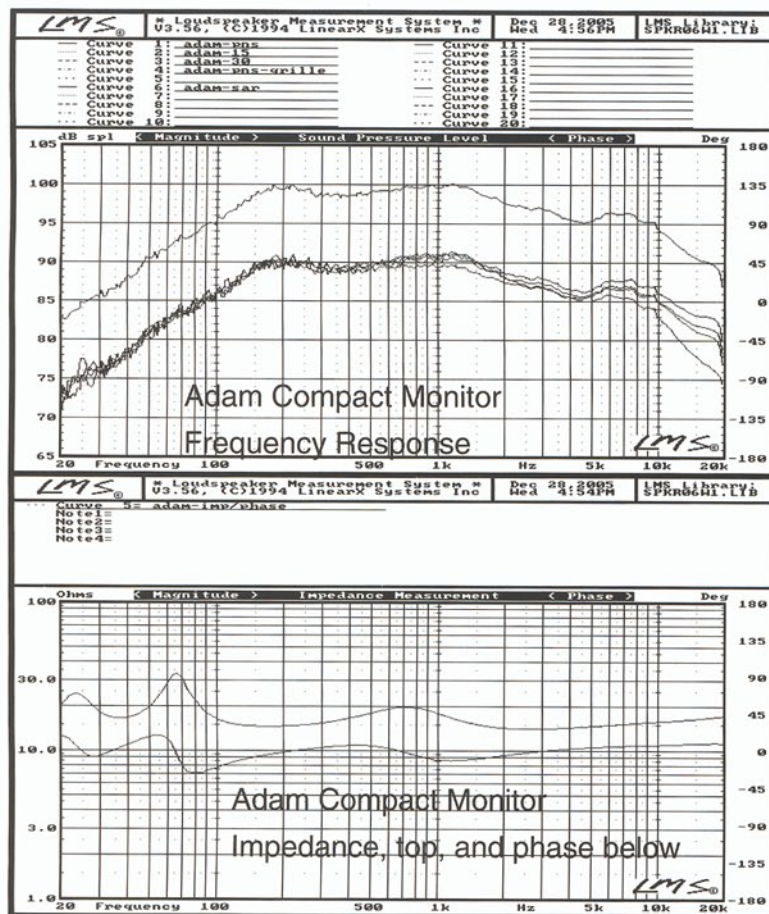
Above 1.5 kHz we see a gradual downward slope to around 4 kHz that indicates a wise decision in a nearfield monitor, especially one with the kind of wide dispersion that we notice here in the off-axis measurements. It looks like there are only three curves, 0, 15, and 30° off axis, but, in fact, that lowest above 5 kHz is at 60° off axis, the 15 and 30°

curves virtually overlapping. This exceptional dispersion means that the ART tweeter puts quite a bit more top end energy into the room, not being beamy at high frequencies like dome designs. So, while the response seems to roll off in the charts, it is actually very extended and open to beyond 10 kHz, where some further rolloff is seen. In the on-axis measurements, top end response is down only down an average of about 2 1/2 dB to 10 kHz, though the Summed Axial Response (at top) does show a slightly greater slope. Believe me when I say that, in this case, the speaker is seemingly better served by the ear than the measurements.

Impedance and electrical phase curves are remarkably smooth, with a minor blip to just above 30 ohms at 65 Hz, impedance staying between 6 and 10 ohms across the rest of the audio band. Phase response (below) is exceptionally smooth through crossover (1.8 kHz), indicating



Diffusion Audio's Andrew Chyrna, left, and Jason Galbraith with their baby. Though an **Adam**, it is not the first among their pro speakers.



virtually perfect driver matching, this also clearly shown in the lack of peaks and dips in the frequency response in this region. The overall inferences to be drawn here are that the *Compact* monitor will behave very well in virtually any room, with very even response everywhere, and will also be easy to drive because of the lack of driver interactions normally found in most speakers because of phase anomalies. In sum, good room coupling means good sound.

And that's what we heard from the *Adam*, though its bass lightness demanded a subwoofer (their *SW260* is available, but probably quite a bit more pricey than some of the excellent models reviewed in these pages recently: good matches would be the *Axiom EP-500* [big] or the *MJ Acoustics Reference 100* [small] from Vol. 22 #3).

Listeners remarked on the extraordinary cleanness of the *ART* tweeter's sound, and the general sweetness and speed of this high frequency reproducer. Bass, if limited, was also very tight and quick, with vanishingly low distortion, especially doubling (the tendency of



some woofers to exaggerate the fundamental bass frequency an octave above that actually being fed into it). This speaker is a true professional monitor that, within its frequency limits, outputs exactly what is put into it, and will be very critical of the quality of amplification it encounters (even as an easy load to drive). Our *Bryston 3B SST* was definitely up to the job, and an utterly sensational match.

After all that, did it displace our reference speakers? Not quite: there are things that a mid-range dome in particular, and a 3-way design in general can achieve that 2-ways don't quite manage.

That said, the *Adam Monitor* is probably better than most 3-way loudspeakers out there, and if rather expensive, really delivers a lot for the big bucks.

