

First Review! Yamaha AW2816 Brings Pro Power to the Project Studio

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A.D.A.M. S3-A

Powered Studio Monitors

by John Gatski



Over the last several years, many low- and moderately-priced powered monitors have been introduced. Now, a few high-end speaker manufacturers are introducing their own take on powered monitors. One such company, German-based A.D.A.M., has introduced a premium-priced, powered speaker, the S3-A that performs among the best in its class.

Features

Located in Berlin, Germany, A.D.A.M. is a relative new comer to the U.S. market. The company offers several different speaker models in powered and unpowered versions - all using ribbon tweeters.

Priced at \$3,995 per pair, the ribbon-tweeter based S3-A is housed in a black MDF cabinet that is trapezoidal shaped at each end. The speaker is designed to be placed vertical or horizontal, such as on a console surface. The speaker contains two 7-inch woofers, one of which is a low bass driver handling signals between 32 and 150 Hz and the other operates as a upper bass woofer/midrange above 150 Hz to the tweeter crossover of 1,800 Hz. The S3-A utilizes a 2.8-inch ribbon tweeter for the treble duties, which is located between the two woofers.

Two, bass-enhancing ports are located next to the tweeter. Slotted rotary controls are also mounted on the front and include a power standby switch, high gain control

At a Glance

Applications:

Studio, post production, broadcast production, mastering

Key Features:

2.8-inch ribbon tweeter, dual 7-inch woofers, trapezoidal cabinet edges, 300 watts of internal amplifier power, room EQ and level controls.

Price:

\$3,995/pair

Contact:

McCave Distribution at 1-800-218-6305; www.mccave.com; or circle

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(tweeter level) plus or minus 4 dB, overall input gain control (plus or minus 10 dB), and bass and treble EQ switches. The treble EQ is a shelving filter with a 6 kHz cutoff and an adjustment range of plus or minus 6 dB. The bass EQ has a 150 Hz cutoff with the same cut and boost variable.

The main power switch and the XLR input connector are located on the back panel. There are no unbalanced inputs. Inside, three separate amps power the woofers and tweeter at 100 watts continu-

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ous, 200 watts peak. The high quality amplifiers are Class AB and are built with audiophile grade components, according to the company. The rear outside surface gets moderately warm in about 10 minutes, and even warmer when cranking the level.

The cabinet measures (in the vertical placement) 20.4 inches tall, just under 10-inches wide and 13 inches deep. The weight is approximately 35 pounds.

In use

In my initial set up in the home studio, I found that the speakers' performance was accurate with the room bass and treble EQ controls set to their flat positions. The same was true with the tweeter level.

I used the A.D.A.M. S3-A in two configurations: as midfield speakers in the middle of the room placed vertically on stands and on stands near the wall where my recording rig is located, also placed vertically. The manual said the S3-A works equally well in the horizontal position, resting on a console. I thought the speakers in my set up sounded better in the

vertical position.

Audio signals were relayed to the A.D.A.M.s via a number of sources, including a mic preamp, DAT, CD-R, cassette deck, DSD player and a 24-bit, 96 kHz Alesis MasterLink. Volume duties were handled by my Legacy High Current Preamp. The pre-amp-to-speaker link was connected via Alpha Core solid silver XLR interconnects cables.

Using an Alesis MasterLink, I made 24-bit/96 kHz acoustic guitar recordings of my Martin D-35 and a new, small bodied Martin 00028-Eric Clapton signature model. The recording chain also included an Earthworks SR-71 mic and a Night Pro PreQ3 mic preamp.

The playback through the A.D.A.M.s was incredible in its realism. In particular, the speaker articulated the natural rich warm bass of the Martin 00028-EC cleanly without excessive midbass boom. The high end of the D-35 was clear and natural through the ribbon tweeter, which is the live characteristic of the guitar.

I also tried out a number of mics for vocal including the bang-for-the-buck Studio Projects C-1 (look for the review in the January 2002 issue of *PAR*) and monitored the playback with the S3-As. The quality of the speakers made the quality of the microphones that much more apparent.

The ambience of the room was relayed by the A.D.A.M. without exaggeration or tweeter sizzle - a positive byproduct of using the ribbon tweeter. In my 10 years experience of listening to ribbon tweeter speakers, such as the Apogees, the Genelec S30D (reviewed in *PAR* June 2001), Legacy Classics and various SLS models, I hear a natural presence that many textile and metal dome tweeter systems don't have.

I played some DSD recordings

(from Tom Jung's DMP catalog) through a Sony SCD-777ES DSD/CD player to test out the speakers' ability to handle horns and percussion. These speakers never ceased to impress. They handled brass instruments without a hint of strain. Percussion was smooth and airy. Just like it should be.

On recorded vocals too, the speaker sounded natural - without excessive sibilance on female vocals and male vocals were realistic without that artificial bloom that other ported closefield speakers impart.

Of course, if there had been any room aberrations that caused an overly bloomy bass or enhanced top-end, the room EQ switches were there tame them.

Despite the size of the drivers, the S3-As worked amazingly well at midfield distance of 7-8 feet. Even with the speakers in the middle of the room 7 feet from the back wall, the A.D.A.M.s still had decent bass.

The negatives are minor. I wish the S3-A had an unbalanced input jack to make it more versatile with outboard preamps that don't use XLRs. The only other concern is the price, but in reality, buying a comparable amp and unpowered speaker pair will likely cost you more than this powered speaker duo.

Summary

Whether you are in studio recording, post or high-end broadcast, the A.D.A.M. S3-A is an impressive, powered closefield monitor that offers performance worthy of the pickiest golden-eared engineer. I look forward to trying the company's other speakers.

John Gatski is the publisher of Pro Audio Review.

Product Points

A.D.A.M. S3-A Powered Monitors

Plus

- Accurate sound
- Quality built-in amps
- Ribbon tweeter smoothness
- Tone tailoring controls

Minus

- No unbalanced connectors
- Expensive

The Score

This premium priced and premium fidelity speaker fits right into the world of high-end powered professional studio monitoring.

Class A Vacuum Tube Signal Processors



MDP-1 Mic/DI Preamp "Outstanding transient response, superior depth, superb spectral balance, unbelievably wide stereo imaging, extended frequency response, low noise and a lusciously warm sound..." *Michael Cooper - MIX*

OCL-2 Optical Compressor "The OCL-2 inspires confidence as a stereo unit that no other optical unit can match and then some... offering unrivaled transparency in its fastest settings." *Eddie Ciletti - EQ*

6386 and ES-8 Variable Mu Limiters "I have used the 6386 as my stereo buss compressor on every mix I have done over the last three months. It sounds absolutely fantastic." *Russ Long - Pro Audio Review*

Pendulum Audio

P.O. Box 339, Gillette, NJ 07933
(908) 665-9333

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