

[REALLY] SMALL PRO-GRADE POWERED SPEAKERS

BY STROTHER BULLINS

Allow me to emphasize: Here we will discuss really small powered speakers/monitors for mobile/desktop production, multimedia and gaming applications. At the recent NAMM Show, the smallest pro-grade powered speakers I'd ever seen or heard before were at the EVE booth. They were really small yet didn't sound small at all. Fact is, our industry provides lots of small powered speaker options, many complete with front-panel inputs and volume adjustment.

If you want to produce, record, mix, write/compose, and/or simply live on your TV tray indefinitely, the following are production-worthy monitoring options to make that fantasy a reality, as I see it.



ADAM AUDIO ARTIST 3 AND A3X

Germany's ADAM Audio with its X-ART folded ribbon tweeter produces some of the finest sounding, reasonably priced powered monitors in pro audio. The bi-amped A3X provides Class-A/B power at 40-watts peak, per driver, comprising a 4.5-inch carbon fiber mid-woofer and 2-inch (4-inch folded) X-ART tweeter. It features a front panel on/off switch, volume knob, XLR and RCA inputs, ± 4 dB of tweeter gain, and a five-year limited warranty. Specifications include a 10x6x7.5-inch size, 10.1-pound weight, 60 to 50k Hz frequency response and 106 dB maximum SPL per pair at 1m. Unique features include Stereolink, allowing volume changes for both speakers while adjusting just one.

Classified as "multimedia speakers," ADAM's ARTist 3, available in black or white,

feature both analog (XLR, RCA, 3.5mm mini stereo) and digital (USB) inputs. They offer nearly the same specifications of the A3X (amp type/wattage, size, weight and woofer and tweeter, etc.), but perform differently due to port positions (A3X's dual front ports vs. ARTist 3's rear port), differences in cabinetry and the quite-valuable USB input. The ARTist 3 is approximately \$50 (street) more than the A3X.



AVANTONE ACTIVE MIXCUBES

Borrowing heavily from the design of the classic Auratone 5C Sound Cubes of yore, these powered, full-range mini reference speakers feature, by design, limited top end (90 to 17k Hz) and a single full-range driver—no crossover point. As such, they mimic the "real world" limitations of typical consumer and industrial audio speakers, making them invaluable when paired with traditional two- or three-way systems. The Active MixCube offers a sealed cabinet, shielded and built of thick MDF and advanced materials (rather than the half-inch particleboard of the original 5C) and features a 60W Class-A/B amplifier featuring combo XLR/TRS/TS inputs; 104 dB of maximum SPL at 1m; -30 dB to +6 dB variable gain control on its rear panel; on/off switch; and it is 7.5 pounds, not to mention a true cube (6.5x6.5x6.5 inches).



CERWIN-VEGA XD3 AND XD4

From a pro audio perspective, Cerwin-Vega is best known as a source of fine live sound and portable P.A. equipment. With its XD Series, the brand proves its mettle in multimedia speakers, too. Unique features of these stereo two-way speaker sets include wooden cabinetry; front panel volume knob, and $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch headphones and aux in jacks; available remote control and auxiliary 8-inch, 80W peak-powered subwoofer. Each XD3 cabinet provides 15 W of peak power, 3-inch woofer, an 88 to 21k Hz frequency response, RCA rear panel input, 8x5.5x6.5-inch size and 6.5-pound weight. Each XD4 cabinet offers 20W of peak power, 4-inch woofer, 75 to 21k Hz frequency response, RCA or balanced $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch TRS rear panel inputs, 9x6.1x8-inch size and 13.6 pounds. Both the XD3 and XD4 feature a $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch soft-dome tweeter. Of course, it wouldn't be Cerwin-Vega without a "Vega Bass" switch, enhancing bass response on either model via an additional rear panel switch.

EVE AUDIO SC204 AND SC203 MASTER/ SLAVE SYSTEM

The smallest speakers in EVE Audio's professional studio monitor line, the bi-amped SC204 provides 50 W of peak power, per driver, comprising EVE's proprietary SilverCone woofer and AMT RS1 tweeter. It features a front pan-



el volume knob, XLR and RCA inputs, detailed DSP-based frequency adjustment via 24-bit/192 kHz Burr-Brown conversion (high-shelf filter, desk filter boost, desk filter cut and low-shelf filter), and more. Specifications

include a 5.7x9x7.7-inch size, 8.4-pound weight, 64 to 21k Hz frequency response and 96 dB maximum SPL per pair at 1m. Unique features include a large rectangular rear bass port.

Offering a folded design tweeter like the SC204's AMT RS1 but in less than half the size, the bi-amped SC203 Master/Slave System (30 W x 30 W per cabinet) is specifically designed for compact pro desktop use with unique features such as EVE's FlexiPad, a v-notch shaped orange rubberized decoupling and angling pad at 0, 7.5 and 15 degree variations. It offers both analog and digital input with RCA and digital optical and USB connectivity. Like the SC204, the SC203 pair features a front panel volume/multifunction input knob and DSP functionality, yet via 24-bit/192 kHz Cirrus Logic conversion and parameters including high shelf, low shelf, LED brightness, input selector and speaker position—flat, desk and console. Specifications include a 4.5x7.5x5.3-inch size, weights of 4.1, 3.7, and .86 pounds (master, slave and FlexiPad, respectively), 62 to 21k Hz frequency response and 94 dB maximum SPL per pair at 1m.

FOCAL CMS40 AND XS 2.1

Premium French speaker manufacturer Focal also offers two really small monitors, the CMS40 and XS 2.1 Speaker System, targeting compact/mobile professional and multimedia/desktop applications, respectively. The bi-amped CMS40 provides Class-A/B power at 25W peak,



per driver, comprising a 4-inch Polyglass woofer and aluminum/magnesium inverted dome Focal tweeter. Features include a painted, reinforced and damped die cast aluminum cabinet; front panel on/off switch and

volume knob; XLR and RCA inputs; low- and high-frequency shelving; and included decoupling table stand, four rubber feet, two height adjustable spikes; phase optimization plug and removable tweeter and woofer grilles. Specifications include a 9x6x6-inch size, 11-pound weight, 60 to 28k Hz frequency response and 97dB maximum SPL per pair at 1m.

Classified as multimedia speakers, the truly unique three amp/three component XS 2.1 offers 30W peak per speaker and 70W peak for its sub-woofer with volume adjustment via Mac, Windows or Linux UI or the included remote.



FOSTEX 6301 AND PM0.3

There are few speaker products in pro audio as universally useful as the Fostex 6301N Series Active Monitor at \$250 street, each. The 6301N Series comprises small sealed

powered speakers built for various monitoring applications thanks to four different I/O configurations. I recently reviewed the 6301N's NE version, updated and repackaged by Fostex, offering analog (electrical-

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