

Baltic „Armada“

In the past, Estonian company Audes was better known as a supplier for established brands, rather than for its own products. But that's not quite the whole truth...



The Audes 146 speaker is part of the Estonian company's "Maestro" line, launched in 2015 to mark the 80th anniversary of the establishment in Tallinn of Raadio-Elektrotehnika Tehas, the earliest ancestor of the Audes brand. And while best-known as a supplier to other brands, Audes has been making its own products since 1958, with the arrival of the Estonia 2 compact radio-gram. In fact, Estonia was the brand-name of RET all the way through to 1992, when Audes was adopted.

Complex mirror symmetry

For the anniversary "Maestro" models, the design was deliberately classical: it harked back to the company's history while incorporating more modern advances in speaker design, thus making it stand out from the mass of today's loudspeakers.

Somewhat unfashionably, the speakers are supplied in mirror-image pairs, with the tweeter and midrange driver offset in the vertical plane from the woofer, the manufacturer intending that the speakers be used with the higher-frequency drivers 'inboard' of the bass units. Though this complicates production, as batches of speakers must be split in half to accommodate the design, this increasing costs, it has acoustic advantages: the unavoidable diffraction effects on the cabinet edges are not the same on both sides of each speaker, but can be distributed more advantageously in the audio spectrum.

The loudspeakers, each weighing 20 kilos and standing slightly over a meter tall, are marked with „L“ and „R“, indicating the designer's preferred set-up. However, depending on the room and the position of the speakers within it, you can still experiment with the alternative setup - with the mid/high speakers 'outboard' - as the effective bass width is slightly increased.

Pure Playing Pleasure

The focus of the development work was on making the speaker easy on amplifiers, which has been achieved with a claimed

91dB sensitivity, while creating a design not just effective when it came to the delivery of the emotion of the music, but also enormous value for money. But there's nothing inexpensive-looking here: the 146 is available in black, white, and walnut, or in additional special veneers or a high-gloss version for an extra charge.

The crossover divides the signal at 250Hz and 4kHz, with the combination of a 25mm fabric dome tweeter and a 13cm polypropylene midrange driver intended to guarantee exceptional dynamics. Audes' self-made, long-stroke 21cm woofer, using a sturdy coated paper diaphragm in a heavy aluminum basket, provides a solid foundation and „punch“, giving a slightly warm, lively sound.

The tuning here is neutrally to minimally midband-forward, and with suitable electronics delivers an extremely pleasant sound probably ideal for many people. However, the perceived sound is not at all what one might expect from the measurement results: one does not miss the last nuance of resolution or the heavy bass which would round off the enjoyment of large orchestral works or even hard rock. Rather, the Audes balance relays Fritz Reiner's orchestra playing Dvorák's 9th Symphony in a superb manner, both temporally and spatially.

The loudspeakers 'disappear' like no other participant of the test, becoming almost invisible in an impressively solid soundstage picture, extending not only out beyond the sides of the speakers but also up and over them.

In a direct comparison, it's clear why the Audes is twice the price of the Canton: the Estonian speaker is always stays a touch on the warm side and its pronounced musicality - as well as its timing - is likely to make the brand even more popular.



▲ Low-inductance twisted cables and high-quality - but not exotic - components characterize the Audes crossover

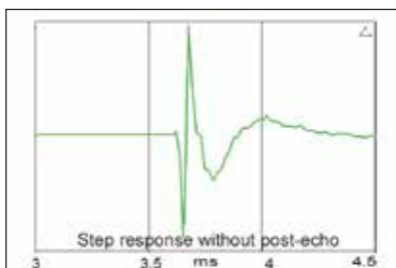
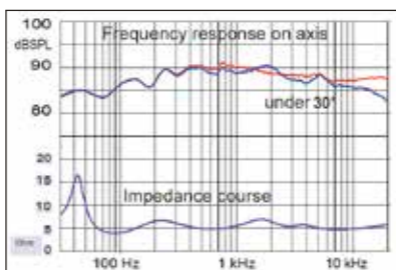
AUDES MAESTRO 146



Dimensions:
24.3 x103.6 x34.9 cm (WxHxD)
Warranty: 5 years
Contact: TCG GmbH
Tel.: 05921/7884927
www.audes.de

Although Audes may be unknown to many, this brand has a long tradition. Extremely pleasant to warm-sounding, the Maestro is a classically-designed, superbly-made loudspeaker delivering with a wide soundstage and an unobtrusive, rounded bass.

MEASUREMENT RESULTS



Nominal impedance	4 Ω
Minimum impedance	4 Ω at 88 hertz
Maximum impedance	17.2 Ω at 44 hertz
Sound pressure (2.83 V / 1 m)	90 dB SPL
Power for 94 dB (1m)	5 W
Lower limit frequency (-3 dB)	36 hertz
Distortion factor at 63 / 3k / 10k Hz	0.3 0.1 0.1%

LABORATORY COMMENT

The Audes frequency response shows a slight midrange emphasis, which is quite common and can sound very pleasant. The bass range extends below 40 hertz, and the speaker with an excellent efficiency of 90 dB. The impedance pattern appears linear and undemanding, and the speaker demonstrates excellent distortion behavior and very good. For the best results the speakers should be toed-in toward the listening position.

STEREOD-TEST

SOUND QUALITY **73%**

PRICE/PERFORMANCE



OUTSTANDING