

TALL, SLIM, FAITHFUL IS LOOKING FOR...

The HiFi market is always good for a surprise; even for veteran fans like me who think they have heard just about everything that is out there and can reproduce sound. Anyway, with these review specimens I was in for a big surprise...



Estonia isn't necessarily the foremost name you think of as a country of origin of upscale HiFi, even if the Baltic brother state Lithuania hosts Reed, manufacturer of the most respectable pick-up arms. The company Audes on the other hand had never really entered my consciousness – so far. As it turns out now, this wasn't only ignorant – after all the company can look back on an almost 80 year history – but also a pity, as the speakers from far north have plenty to offer indeed!

The Audes Excellence 5 AMT is the bigger one of two models that constitute the Ex-

cellence AMT series. AMT stands for Air Motion Transformer, which is a magneto-static speaker for the reproduction of high frequencies developed by German engineer and inventor Oskar Heil and that was patented in 1935 in the UK. Its membrane is folded like an accordion bellow and covered in conducting paths in a meandering pattern. The membrane is located within a magnetic field, thus stretching and contracting according to the signal fed. The advantage: Using this technology, comparatively minor movements of the membrane can produce a much higher sound pressure level, also benefitting speed and

The mastership of the craftsmen at Audes is apparent wherever you look.



control. The upper cut-off frequency of 30,000 Hz also isn't a magic trick here. The Excellence-without-AMT-series (four models plus one center speaker, from 2,100 Euro per pair) has to get along (surprise) without the AMT tweeter, making use of a conventional dome tweeter instead. In the midrange, the AMT series uses two 5-inch drivers per side. They're made by Seas and their membrane consists of a cellulose-based material. The midrange drivers are placed in a D'Appolito array above respectively below the AMT driver and cover the frequency band between 3,000 and 100 Hz, dealing with the most important range. For me they are the true linchpins of these speakers – we'll see later, why...

In the bass range, two 8-inch woofers that are mounted on the side of each speaker are working hard to deliver the requested pressure. The woofers have been developed by Audes and are said to fulfill their duties down to 28 Hz (at -3dB). And it's easy to believe these claims, considering the weight of a hefty 121 pounds (55 kg) and the height of almost 54 inches (136 cm). The voluminous, heavy-weight cabinets give an absolutely flawless impression, even if I personally grew a bit tired of the Makassar look already. Of course other finishes are available: high gloss black or

white are available as standard finishes, too, and the black front and rearward sloping top are the only thing you see sitting in the sweet spot, anyway – provided the toe-in angle is sufficient.

Sound

Speaking of the toe-in angle: 15° is a recommendable starting point, giving focus and depth to the soundstage and rendering voices and sound events in the mid and upper range more direct and goose-bump-inducingly realistic. Truly, goose bumps were inevitable after the speakers had settled in again after the exertions of their transport. At the beginning, the bass range seemed to be slightly too fat, not very agile and not very deep, but after just a few hours of warming up at our ASR Emitter I, these inconveniences vanished into thin air. Relaxed, forceful and blessed with authority, the woofers build a solid base for the rest of the frequency range and at the same time imply unmistakably that they want you to position the speakers in your generously sized listening room as freely as possible. With Erykah Badu's „Other Side of the Game“, a quite bassy song, a tiny upper bass belly becomes apparent – which at

Equipment

CD players:

- Shanling CD-S100MKII,
- Accuphase DP-550

Amplifiers:

- ASR Emitter,
- Accuphase C-2420 and A-46

Accessories:

- Power cables and filters: PS Audio
- RCA cables from Silent Wire, Transparent, Nordost
- Base and feet from SSC, Tabula Rasa



Two brand new drivers from Scandinavia complement the splendid AMT. The phase plugs optimize the radiation behavior.





Music

Loreena McKennitt
The Book of Secrets

Erykah Badu
Baduizm

Madonna
Die Another Day

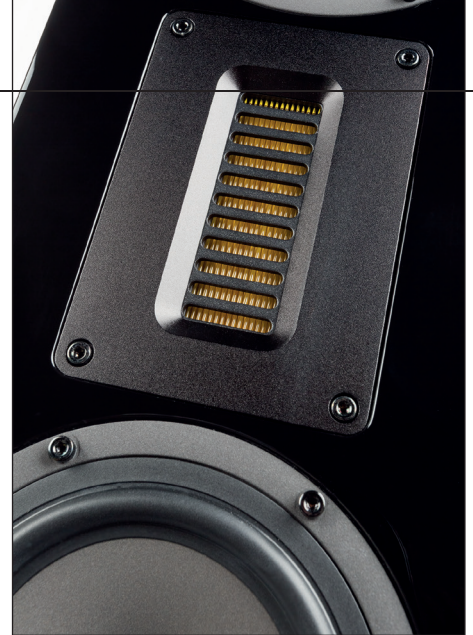


The Audes Excellence 5 AMT is a truly impressive speaker but doesn't dominate the space unduly

least in part should be caused by our listening room and could be dealt with easily by careful positioning of the speakers. This slightly voluptuous, yet always controlled and well articulated upper bass also shapes the overall character of the Audes Excellence 5 AMT, and that's a good thing. Given the enormous (!) resolution of the AMT tweeter and the almost holographic transparency of the Seas midrange woofers, some developers surely would run the risk of designing one of those infamous audiophile-ethereal sound magnifiers with which one can hear the button of the violinist in row three fly off and fall on the floor ("Definitely silver, the sound it made falling on the teak floor was too bright for brass!") but produce nothing but hot air from the string bass and timpani section. Luckily, Audes didn't take the bait, and they also didn't make an annoying mistake we have to witness in the listening rooms of the world's HiFi shows again and again, and in all its consequences: the return of "the spectacular bathtub sound". In that case, a lot of much too bright treble competes against even more bass. The pitiful rest of directness and pseudo-complexity in the mid range is mostly simulated by an excess of energy in the lower treble range. In the long run, this kind of tuning becomes very tiresome for the ears. The Audes Excellence 5 AMT on the other hand are well balanced, and even if they can't compete with the likes of an Intonation Terzian in terms of homogeneity, the temporal alignment and tonal integration of the five drivers has turned out very well. Even after hours of listening my ears did not complain about phase offset or stuff like this. The abundance of information and



The tweeter level can be adjusted to match the room acoustics



The Air Motion Transformer displays a uniquely dynamic character

the plethora of micro detail in the middle and upper range are almost overwhelming, but never overbearing. Sounds appear on the virtual soundstage with natural ease and realism. The very low-volume crinkle of a vinyl disk in the beginning of Erykah Badu's "Apple Tree" had never really attracted my notice before – now I can hear it, served on a silver plate but perfectly integrated. The stunningly complex articulatory complexity of voice, ambient noise and instruments, the dynamic jumps and increments where none appeared to be before make me feel like being on a discovery trip through recordings I thought I knew well, being exposed to a new dimension of detail and a truly captivating small and large signal behavior. The slim Estonian speaker

Audes Excellence 5 AMT

- Price from 14.000 Euro
- Distributor TCG Handels GmbH, Nordhorn, Germany
- Telephone +49 5921 78849 27
- Internet www.tcg-gmbh.de
- Warranty 10 years
- H x W x D 1360 x 227 x 524 mm
- Weight 55 kg
- Finishes Piano black lacquer/Makassar, Piano black or white lacquer

Verdict

An attractive, elegant loudspeaker that plays without apparent dynamic limits, offers the full range of frequencies and yet has a sense of delicate subtlety. Very homogenous, cultivated and incredibly detailed sound. Not suitable for very small rooms.

HiFi
Lautsprecher
Test-Jahrbuch 2015



Two laterally mounted and very potent woofers provide a solid bass foundation

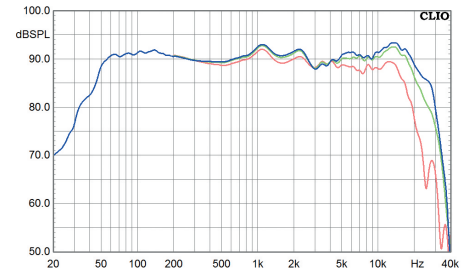
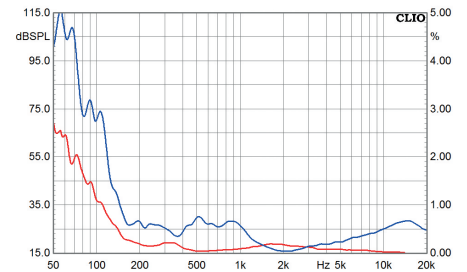
kers never seem to work up a proper sweat though, they manage to fill even big rooms with sufficient energy. Speaking of room: The virtual stage is always as big as the recording requires it. Loreena McKennitt's album „The Book of Secrets“ has a lot of

spatial differentiation to offer, even if it has been added artificially. This fact is being revealed by the Audes speakers in an almost nonchalant but unequivocal way. Still it's an exciting pleasure to experience the wide, superbly arranged and not excessively big sound stage that evokes an acoustic movie in front of the inner eye, showing magnificent images of oriental cities and spice-laden caravans.

Hard cut: With Madonna's „Die Another Day“, an electronically overladen loudspeaker killer, it's easy to separate the wheat (true world-class speakers) from the chaff (annoying dazzlers). It's not only the extreme, gated bass but also the brusquely modulated analog synthesizers in the mid and high frequency ranges that demand everything from any speakers unlucky enough to be tortured this way. The Audes exhibit a very good bass control here and make it possible to listen to the whole track at highest volumes without urging me to turn the volume down – that's a sure sign for a more than capable loudspeaker!



The surface quality demonstrates decades of experience in building speakers



Very balanced frequency response with a very deep low frequency end for a closed cabinet concept. The circular radiation behavior of the tweeter is in a class of its own. The quality of the drivers and the crossover becomes apparent in the impeccable distortion measurements at a very high average level of 95 dB. This means one can listen to the Audes for a long time at high levels without fatigue.

Michael Bruss