

Silver Dream Machines

Adam Smith has a blast with the new AAD Silver 5 floorstanding loudspeakers...

reinforced by several braces to maintain rigidity, and the cabinets respond to the good old knock test with a pleasing 'thud', suggesting well damped cabinets.

Driver lineup is a pair of five inch (125mm) bass/mid units, allied to a one inch (25mm) tweeter of unusual design. AAD call it a 'Spiral Ribbon Horn' and it differs from a conventional tweeter in that the voice coil is a spiral of pure aluminium directly bonded to a lightweight Kapton substrate, giving incredibly low mass but good heat dispersal and mechanical deformation properties, it is claimed. This also removes the need for a separate dome and thus, also the breakup problems associated with such an item.

The unit itself is located at the mouth of a specially designed horn, which improves off axis response and assists with achieving good transient response. The Silver 5s come with a substantial plinth that is bolted to the bottom of the main cabinet, and this permits the angle of the loudspeaker to be adjusted before it is finally tightened up. Into this fit four beautifully machined spikes that can be easily adjusted for levelling. Input terminal count is four, which allow for bi-amping or bi-wiring.

SOUND QUALITY

The AADs are a tall loudspeaker and have a correspondingly capacious sound to go with it. Their soundstage is wide and deep and really gives superb sense of atmosphere to recordings. This is aided in no small part by the bass, which is deep, powerful and totally belies the two



One of the names that will undoubtedly spring to mind when considering highly capable loudspeaker designers is that of Phil Jones. Responsible for the original Acoustic Energy AE1s back in the 1980s, Phil then decamped to the US and, after working on various projects with a variety of companies, founded American Acoustic Developments (AAD) in 1990. As might be expected, AAD design and manufacture all their drive units and cabinets in-house in their

Missouri factory. We have already covered their model C550 back in our September 2006 issue, and the Silver 5s sit a little higher up the range hierarchy.

Your £1,500 buys you immaculately finished and weighty loudspeakers which tip the scales at 24kg (53lbs) each, and are available in two finishes - the high gloss cherry and piano black of the review samples, or high gloss maple plus metallic silver. Finish is impeccable, although very attractive to fingerprints. Internally, the cabinets are

relatively small drive units from which it emanates.

Playing some more complex material reveals that this capacious bass is pleasingly agile and will keep up with more sophisticated bass lines without breaking into a sweat. Jsh Wobble's 'The Sun Does Rise' has a typically Wobble-esque complicated and driving bass line; the Silver 5s lapped this up and pounded it out with gusto. However, there was a sense that this enthusiasm right at the very bottom end was somewhat swamping upper bass detail.

The finely played bass guitar from Simply Red's 'Sad Old Red' revealed that this was indeed the case. The overall bass line was powerful, but the finer details of the strings being plucked and the sliding of bassist Tony Bowers' hand up and down the fretboard tended to be rather overshadowed. Whist never becoming boomy or uncontrolled, the well extended bottom end did occasionally tend to dominate finer upper bass detail.

This same track, however, also highlighted the real strengths of the AADs, namely their midrange and treble. The unique tweeter design used on the Silver 5s really does work as treble is superb. Detail retrieval is impeccable and yet at the same time, the tweeter never draws undue attention to itself. All too often, loudspeakers achieve good levels of detail by artificially boosting the whole of the treble output which has the side effect of making the sound quite forward or bright. The Silver 5s show the benefits of excellent tweeter design as the rise in output over the 5-8kHz region clearly adds detail but without hardening or brightening the sound unnecessarily.

Matched well to the treble is the midrange from the two bass/mid drivers. Vocals were very well projected, giving singers great body and definition and firmly locating them centre-stage. The vocals from 'Pretty Good Year' by Tori Amos were fantastically stable and precise, as was her piano. My wife played the piano and has long been of the opinion that quite a few of the systems I drag her along to listen to do not reproduce this deceptively complex instrument too well. I feel sure, however, that she would approve of the Silver 5s!

Moving to orchestral works, Holst's Planets Suite proved that the Silver 5s are more than capable of laying an orchestra out in front of you

with depth and realism. They rose superbly to the challenge of rollicking out the full jollity of 'Jupiter' whilst becoming quiet and composed for the mystical delights of 'Neptune' with equal impunity. In fact, the AADs were quite happy to play a wide variety of music and remained essentially neutral and competent throughout.

CONCLUSION

As might well be expected, the AAD Silver 5s have the sort of performance you would expect from a thoughtfully designed loudspeaker made by a company with a well-known designer at the helm.

The Silver 5s have a large, detailed and composed sound that makes the best of a great deal of music. It seems a strange comment to make but very little stands out about them particularly, but I mean this in a good way because they have an essentially neutral character. When listening you gain the impression that you are hearing everything you are supposed to hear, without anything being artificially boosted.

The only exception to this is with the lower bass which, while well extended, can tend to be a little too prominent and slightly loose, drowning out upper bass detail to an extent. This can be controlled through judicious positioning and choice of partnering equipment, but means that an audition is, as always, mandatory.



MEASURED PERFORMANCE

Frequency response of the AADs is generally flat up to 5kHz, when there is a 6dB rise in level up to 8kHz, which then falls off again before peaking once more at around 10kHz. This means that the Silver 5s will have plenty of upper mid and lower treble detail and presence. Only listening will reveal whether it becomes too forward with some material.

Bass output is very good from the two bass drivers, starting rolloff at 70Hz, before handing over to the twin rear-facing ports which work at a low 30Hz. The Silver 5s should therefore have good bass despite their slim profile and small drivers.

The impedance curve is less flat than some but has nothing unpleasant waiting to attack your amplifier.

Sensitivity is good at 87dB and average impedance measures 7.3 Ohms dipping to a minimum of 4 Ohms exactly. Once again, a 4 Ohm compatible amplifier

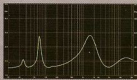
is required, but 30-40 watts should be sufficient for good sound levels. AS

FREQUENCY RESPONSE



Green - driver output
Red - port output

IMPEDANCE



VERDICT

Fine dynamics, earth treble and good soundstaging make for a truly musical loudspeaker.

AAAD SILVER 5 £1,500

Synergy Distribution
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FOR

- svelte, detailed treble
- fine soundstage
- dynamic nature

AGAINST

- low bass dominant at times