

TAPE OP

The Creative Music Recording Magazine

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Joy Division, Buzzcocks

BILL SZYMCZYK

The Eagles, Joe Walsh, The Who

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Malibu's Indigo Ranch

TANYA DONELLY

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The Beatles Revisited

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\$4.95 No. 103

Sept/Oct 2014



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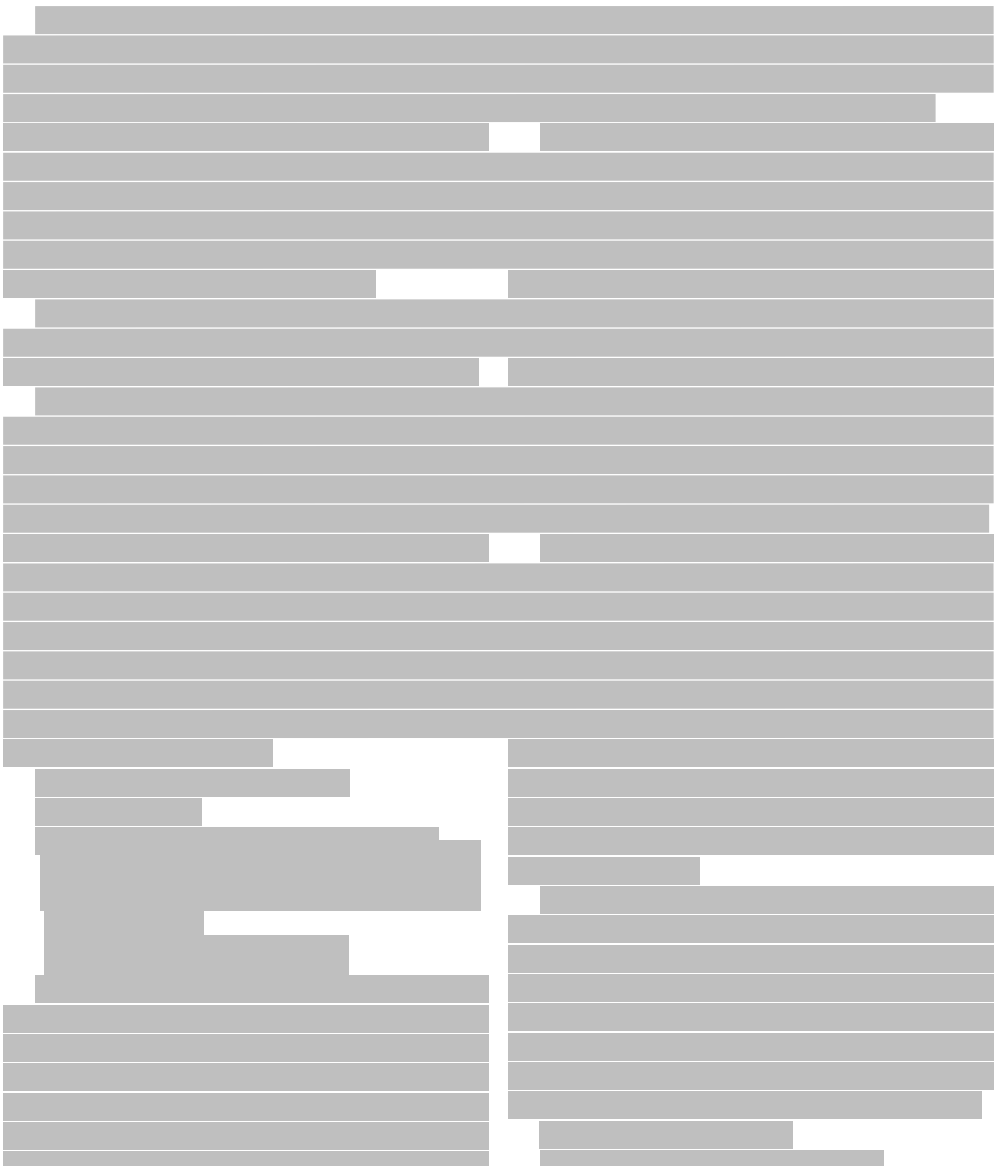
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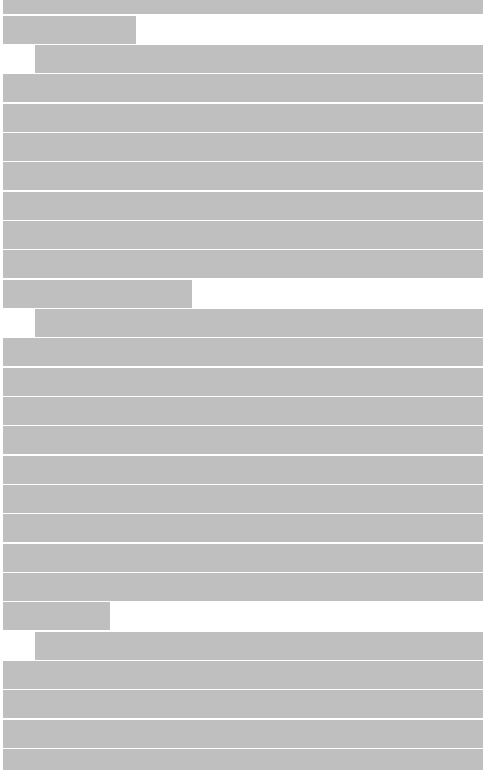
EVE AUDIO

SC205 2-way monitor

TS107 subwoofer

As someone who has been using ADAM monitors fairly religiously for the past seven years or so, I became quite interested when I heard that the former CEO of ADAM Audio had started a new speaker company, called EVE Audio. It turns out that the ADAM and EVE speaker lines have pretty much one thing in common — pleated-diaphragm tweeters based on Dr. Oskar Heil's Air Motion Transformer — but the similarities seem to stop there. Roland Stenz, the aforementioned CEO, is apparently on a mission to perfect monitor design. As such, the EVE line is a departure from ADAM, and it's full of innovations intended to contribute flatter, clearer monitoring to the average engineer's meter bridge or desktop.

The first such innovation worth mentioning is that all control of the speaker's filtering, equalization, and volume is accomplished via DSP. Yes, that *D* in there is for *Digital*, so it means that all the audio coming out of the speakers has gone through an extra A/D stage after leaving your mixing desk or converters. I'm happy to report that I didn't realize this until I had already been using the *SC205* monitors for a while, so I didn't approach them with an analog-only bias. This helped



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preclude any irrational fears I may have had about degradation due to conversion within the speaker, which is accomplished via a high-quality Burr-Brown 24-bit, 192 kHz ADC. If the conversion is coloring the sound at all, it's inherently part of whatever coloration the speakers themselves impart. Since there are no digital inputs, an A/B of the conversion is impossible, and in my opinion irrelevant.

(Technically speaking, there is also a D/A stage that follows the DSP, but not the kind that you see in a standalone converter. The DSP section connects directly to each driver's Class D [Pulse Width Modulation] amplifier, without the typical PCM or PDM-based DAC providing conversion to an analog signal beforehand. In other words, the Class D amp, a passive filter, and the driver combined work together as a system that converts the digital signal into sound waves.)

DSP functions are all accessed via a single rotary-encoder/button on the face of each speaker. Volume level is shown on a series of tiny LEDs surrounding the knob. There are settings to illuminate either a single volume LED or all LEDs up to that level, and the LEDs can be made to shine brightly or dimly. Volume adjustments are made in 0.5 dB increments in the meat of the range, down to 2 dB increments at -48 dB. Access to such precise and evenly-matched adjustments makes whatever small cost there may be of A/D conversion totally worth it. Other DSP duties include high-shelf (above 3 kHz) and low-shelf (below 300 Hz) cut/boost capabilities, as well as a "Desk Filter" adjustment, which either cuts 180 Hz or boosts 80 Hz. All of these filters have a maximum boost of 3 dB and a maximum cut of -5 dB, in 0.5 dB increments. I kept the speakers flat throughout my testing period, and never felt the need for filter adjustments, although it's nice to have the option when necessary.

I guess that means I thought the speakers sounded pretty good right out of the box. I love the smoothness of the SC205's Air Motion Transformer tweeter. (The AMT is commonly referred to as a "folded ribbon tweeter," but it works quite differently from a standard ribbon driver, and it has many advantages over a linear ribbon transducer. I encourage you to refer to the Internet if you'd like to know more specifics about the technology.) As for the upper midrange on the EVE, I found it robust enough to judge what's happening in that range, but easy to listen to for hours at a time. I tend to rely on headphones for the final checking of sibilance, and cymbal and guitar harshness, but that's the case no matter which speakers I use. Even though my current mix room is quite small, and I've had issues with other similar-sized speakers getting boomy in the low midrange due to proximity to the back wall, the SC205 sounds much flatter and truer in that range, even without any equalization. I attribute this fact to a critical difference from ADAM speakers, which is that EVEs have their bass ports in the rear of the enclosure, and they are long rectangular ports designed to minimize distortion in the low frequencies, even at higher SPLs. (This is a good time to mention that the LEDs on the face of the speakers blink when the A/D converters are getting overloaded, which is a handy way to ensure that any distortion you're hearing isn't coming from the speaker system itself.)

Of course, the SC205 model is only sporting 5" woofers, so it only faithfully represents frequencies down into the mid-50 Hz region. When my pair arrived, I had been toying with the idea of getting a sub for my home studio, since I started doing more actual mixing here than I had originally envisioned. I had just started to mix an album by Zun Zun Egui, a really interesting British band with a lot of dance and Jamaican influence. It was clear that I was going to need a better window into the frequencies they had laid to tape, but a big heavy-duty subwoofer seemed like overkill for my small space. EVE Audio's TS107 subwoofer, supplied by the kind Bruce Bartone at TruNorth Music & Sound, came to the rescue, and the timing couldn't have been more perfect. This is a compact subwoofer, small enough for my space, and the extension of the TS107 down to 36 Hz really helped a ton when dealing with the kick and bass fundamentals and subtones of the Zun Zun record.

The TS107 comes with a remote, which enables you to adjust almost all of its parameters without crawling under your desk. Since you daisychain your main speakers through the TS107, this gives you remote volume control and a single-button mute for your whole speaker system. You can also use the remote to flip the polarity of the TS107, mute only the subwoofer (which bypasses the 80 Hz high-pass filter to the mains, as it should), adjust the subwoofer's relative volume, and change the corner frequency of the subwoofer's low-pass filter (in seven steps between 60 Hz and 140 Hz). A dedicated LFE input as well as a 300 Hz LFE filter mode allows you to use this subwoofer in a true 2.1 configuration. Of course, it took some futzing with position, polarity, subwoofer level, and LPF frequency to find a place where I felt that the TS107 was helping and not hurting my mixes, but it feels dialed now. Now when I bypass the subwoofer, which I often do to make sure the low end also feels right on the small speakers alone, I really miss it.

In general, I find judging speakers a really difficult task, since what "sounds good" is so relative, and can even shift over time. That being said, after a couple of months of use, I still really like the way the SC205 speakers sound, and working on them every day makes me happy. I appreciate that mixes done on them translate well, and I also enjoy listening to my favorite records through them. For me personally, in my small home mix room, they completely deliver, and even more so when coupled with the TS107 subwoofer. I purchased this set of speakers, and I plan on auditioning the bigger models in a few months when I'm setting up the control rooms of our forthcoming Brooklyn studio Figure 8, so I would call that a definite thumbs-up.

(SC205 \$599 street each, TS107 \$599; www.eve-audio.com)

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