

SIMON ALLEN finds out if the S3Xs are simply developments of the S3A, or something wholly new and exciting.

As the successor of the world famous S3A that can be found in many high level studios across the globe, this is not just an upgrade but a complete reinvention. All sound elements from the speakers to the electronics have had a careful inspection and like others, I have been really looking forward to hearing the results. The S Series has and always will be a leader in studio monitoring, so the SX Series has got to deliver something extra and carry on the legacy.

shelf filter for frequencies above 6kHz.

The hexa-cones for the two woofers and the 4-inch mid-range driver are made from a honeycomb structure for strength and minimal weight, then coated in Kevlar which is a very strong and advanced material. This makes the cones much more efficient and more rigid than other types of cone. They can also withstand pressure much better and therefore resist deformation longer than other designs. Behind the cones the X model

ADAM S3X-H

Three-Way Reference Monitors

Overview

The review model I was sent was the S3X-H, a horizontal (H) mounting unit with dual woofers. The vertical units in the SX series have single woofers. The first thing you notice about the X-H model is the new 4-inch mid-range cone making this now a three-way monitor. I always felt the S3A produced plenty of middle, so was very interested to see this development. Whilst setting up the S3Xs along side a current pair of S3As, I went looking for a speaker A and speaker B to match the S3As, but now the two 7-inch woofers cover the same frequency range and therefore transmit symmetrically. This also now makes it easier for a multi-speaker arrangement to be set up.

The design is in keeping with the S3A but with a fresher approach. The units are slightly larger, have more modern lines, and a different front panel layout. Extra functionality has been given to the front control panel. There are now two gain levels, a coarse and a fine tune to allow monitor level between different monitors to be set accurately. The EQ section has been given four controls, the first being a bass boost at 80Hz. The second is a shelf filter to manage the frequencies below 150Hz. At the top end there is a high frequency volume from -2dB to +2dB and a high



houses longer coils and larger magnets for a much better bass response.

The famous ART tweeter as used in ADAM's monitors has also undergone reconstruction in the X model providing 4dB higher efficiency and reproducing frequencies accurately all the way to 50kHz, which has made such a difference. The ART tweeter from ADAM has always been

one of its strong points, but this new X-ART tweeter is a perfect balance in what is an excellent piece of craftsmanship.

A new optional extra for the S3X is a 24-bit/192kHz digital to analogue input. This can either be on AES/EBU or SPDIF connections with switchable R/L/Mono positions. Inside there is a new A/B amplifier with ultra low distortion, which delivers an ultra wide frequency response up to 300kHz.

In Use

After having placed the S3X-H alongside the other monitors in the studio including a pair of S3As, it took seconds whilst hearing the new X-model to realise how different these speakers were going to be. It was immediately obvious that these weren't a pair of S3As

THE REVIEWER

SIMON ALLEN is a full time sound engineer and record producer. Previously studio manager at High Barn Studios in Essex, he is now based at City Studios in Cyprus where he is Senior Engineer and heads up the new music studio.



The vertical version – S3X-V.

▶ that had been tweaked, but a completely different unit.

I have always enjoyed the S3As, finding them very comfortable to work on for many hours at a time, and knew how they would show up some grey areas on mixes before they left the studio. However, we sometimes had a problem trying to bring them in line with our Genelec 1025 main monitors and NS-10s. The new S3X-H fell into that gap comfortably.

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When comparing the new S3Xs to the S3As, the first thing that jumps to mind is how they make the S3As sound boxy. This must be very surprising to anyone that knows the S3A, as they weren’t known for this. The new model has taken what the S3A delivered so well and opened it up further. I believe that this is down to the three-way set up and dual woofers handling the same frequency range. The mid-range 4-inch cone hasn’t just provided extra clarity in that important frequency band of music production, but taken some of the responsibility away from both the woofer and the tweeter. The tweeter isn’t compromised by some high-mids, and now it also has a response up to 50kHz it makes the clarity even wider.

Making An Impression

As well as the impression you get from the new X-model and the depth of clarity it is apparent that the sound radiates from the unit much better. There is a better feel from the listening sweet spot and right across the whole room. They project very well for a fairly standard

size speaker.

I currently use an ADAM Sub12 with the S3As, but the S3X’s bass response is very deep and tight due to the two woofers working symmetrically, so that it is very comfortable to work on them without the need of the Sub12. The X-model sounds very well rounded and shows up where the S3A was lacking. The amount of bass that is delivered is impressive but it’s also how it appears in front of you that makes the new model sit so well.

Conclusion

The S3A is an amazing unit with some excellent technologies, and ADAM hasn’t just built on this to give us the S3X, but has built something new and exciting with what it knows so well. The sound has been opened up in a whole new way that I believe consistently delivers more reliable results outside of your studio. These are reference monitors, and as they make their way into studios they will become part of the standard called ‘music production’. The S3X radiates sound

into the room with depth, accuracy, and clarity in the way you need it to be with comfort and ease. These are monitors that need to be heard. **AM**

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INFORMATION

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