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Audio Note AZ-Three Speaker

Pure Note

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Technical Information

Audio Note AZ-Three is a two-way speaker system of a hybrid transmission line, folded horn, and bass reflex design. Dimensions are 1000*280*344 mm (H*W*D). Crossover frequency is 4 kHz. The tweeter is the 25-mm impregnated cloth dome, and the woofer is the 200-mm paper cone. The speakers are nicely efficient, about 95 dB, according to our measurements. The shape of the bass response is dictated by the cabinet design providing installation versatility of the speakers. The boost at 3.5 kHz is possibly caused by the flexure of the paper cone; the corresponding coloration is virtually inaudible. As a whole, the frequency response looks well-balanced. The harmonic distortion in the essential frequency range is no more than 0.5% both at 0.5 (88 dB) and 1 Pa (94 dB) signal. Bass distortion is rather low; the significance of the peak at 100 Hz should not be overstated, because it has only minor audible consequences.

Fragment: General View of the Rear Panel

The massive AZ-Three is the rightful top model of the Absolute Zero speaker range produced by the legendary Audio Note well-known among the audiophiles. The tailored design of the system lays a kind of emphasis on the fact that the main task of any speaker system is (to reproduce) sound. Its unique design shows inexhaustible potentialities of classical speakers. The idea of using interfering low-frequency acoustic properties of the room to aid bass response seems very attractive and, at the same time, causes some suspicion. At least, a wide field is open for do-it-yourself experiments. The leader of the range is expectedly similar to the AZ-2 (S&V no.3, 2000). However, AZ-Three has a different tweeter. The wide horn mouth has become even wider. The binding posts enable bi-wiring. The capacitors and wiring can be upgraded to better ones (at extra cost, or course).

In accurate, deep, and, above all, clear bass is not surprising at all; this is the family feature. In general, the fundamental advantage of AZ-Three is an excellent image clarity, which is due to the low harmonic and intermodulation distortion. The small value of the latter is responsible for the excellent quality of choral vocals, which is a rare and significant advantage even for high-class speakers. The voices in the monolith stream form a well-readable pattern, the ear relaxes listening to the harmony unobstructed by the characteristic dredge. I won't have the heart to speak about genre preferences; both rock and the most complicated classical music are played easily. Treble is very nice; its exhaustiveness, austerity, and the absence of unnecessary accents is to the audiophile's taste. The sound stage imaging is stable across the front. The sound stage is even as if it grows as a single solid wall; the third dimension is not thoroughly elaborated though. Nevertheless, the image is shaped rather eloquently. Note that the spatial effects are strongly dependent on the speaker position in the room. In this connection, we strongly recommend to follow the placement instructions given by the manufacturer.

In addition to the genre neutrality mentioned above, the indifference to the room size should be mentioned as an advantage. The speakers can be safely placed in a very small room without a risk of spoiling the bass. Their high sensitivity gives one a free hand in choosing an amplifier; in particular, a combination with a valve amplifier can be very interesting.

Advantages: perfect bass, very clear sound

Drawbacks: slightly simplified sound stage

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