

## STANDMOUNT LOUDSPEAKER



# Acoustic Energy AE300

**A** compact standmount, the AE300 is designed for small-to-medium sized rooms and sports 18mm-thick MDF cabinet walls in a standard box shape. Extensive internal damping has been used to reduce colouration and bracing technology derived from Acoustic Energy's Reference Series is employed. To the rear is a slot-shaped reflex port, said to reduce the effect of air turbulence.

Both drive units are bespoke designs rather than being bought off the shelf from external suppliers. The mid/bass unit is a 130mm affair with a new ceramic/aluminium sandwich cone with a shallow profile, and long-throw motor system. A new 28mm aluminium tweeter has been developed, which is said to offer high power handling and low distortion, allied to good dispersion thanks to the company's Wide Dispersion Technology (WDT) waveguide. The two drivers cross over at 2.8kHz; the crossover itself is a third-order, 11-component impedance-matched and phase-aligned design. Multi-stranded OFC wiring is chosen for its matching electrical properties to the copper coil windings in the drive

units, says the company. Round the back, a single pair of sturdy speaker binding posts is fitted.

### Sound quality

The AE300 performs very much like the more affordable AE100, except there's more of it. Rather like Spinal Tap's guitar amp that goes up to 11, this standmount offers the same basic punchy and animated sound, but it's bigger, bolder and more assertive. It's also a more subtle and polished product, bringing greater insight into the recording rather than just focusing on the music's groove.

Feed it some simple electro in the shape of *Uncle Bob's Burly House*, and the AE300 sounds surprisingly large for something of such physical slender means. It has vast tracts of sub-bass that kick in at regular intervals and instead of coughing and wheezing, the speaker pumps it out like a good 'un. It's surprisingly tuneful too, considering the relatively small size of its mid/bass unit.

Warping back another two decades, Steve Hackett's *Star Of Sirius* is dense, textural and multi-layered, with plenty of dynamics courtesy of that big Phil Collins drum sound. The AE300 manages to unpack a large

amount of low-level detail, throwing out lots of subtle, nuanced information. It holds things together on crescendos commendably well, compressing far less than expected at high levels and letting the lustre of the recording shine through.

Playing 4hero's *Give In*, the AE300 conjures up a large soundstage that boldly goes – in my room at least – where few other small loudspeakers can. It's hard to design a small two-way that doesn't image well, but even given the benefit of its small size it excels. Strands of the mix are located with precision, and the central vocal sounds full and enveloping. The relaxed yet assured way that the speaker pushes the sound out into the room really impresses.

In truth, though, it isn't this aspect of the performance that really tugs on the heartstrings – it is the way that it gets into the groove. This track has a massive, sumptuous one and seems custom made for this little loudspeaker; things flow with a lovely gait. There's no sense that the AE300 is in a hurry, that it sounds showy or over eager to please. Rather, it just slips into any rhythm it can find and sidles its way through. I find myself really rather beguiled by how it carries the natural phrasing of the music, as well as subtle dynamic accenting that's really likable.

### Conclusion

This is not a universal panacea – it doesn't do everything perfectly. Many will be keener to audition the AE309 floorstander with its octave or so of extra bass and greater ease at high volumes. However, its treble is good enough to get the job done, even though there are more sparkly sounding standmounts around at this price. What the AE300 does, it does very well and is always a pleasure to listen to – in its own way it makes music magic, and you can't ask for much more than that. **DP**

### DETAILS

**PRODUCT**  
Acoustic Energy  
AE300

**PRICE**  
£599

**ORIGIN**  
UK/China

**TYPE**  
2-way standmount  
loudspeaker

**WEIGHT**  
6.5kg

**DIMENSIONS**  
(WxHxD)  
175 x 300 x 260mm

**FEATURES**  
• 1x 25mm tweeter  
• 1x 130mm mid/  
bass driver  
• Quoted sensitivity:  
86dB/1W/1m (6ohm)

**DISTRIBUTOR**  
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**REVIEWED**  
HFC 434

### Hi-Fi Choice

#### OUR VERDICT

**SOUND QUALITY**  
★★★★★

**LIKE:** Animated,  
punchy sound;  
usefully refined

**VALUE FOR MONEY**  
★★★★★

**DISLIKE:** Nothing at  
the price

**BUILD QUALITY**  
★★★★★

**WE SAY:** Surprisingly  
capable small speaker  
with style to spare

**EASE OF DRIVE**  
★★★★★

#### OVERALL

★★★★★