

FLOORSTANDING LOUDSPEAKER



Acoustic Energy AE309

Although the AE309 is a thoroughly conventional box loudspeaker, AE's engineers have honed the design and introduced a myriad of improvements, including better drive units and cabinet construction.

A 2.5-way design, it gets the company's 25mm aluminium dome tweeter that sports its so-called Wide-Dispersion Technology. Aluminium is a light and stiff metal that when used correctly can be very effective as a drive unit. Indeed, it also surfaces in the 130mm mid/bass driver, this time sandwiched between two layers of ceramic. The AE309 gets two, working in parallel to give the effective air moving abilities of a much larger single cone, while being able to preserve the speaker's neat, narrow tower proportions. The cone material is claimed to be very stiff but well damped, with an ultra-high

force, long-throw motor system. Power handling and dispersion are also said to be improved over previous designs.

Sound quality

This floorstander has been really well done – and the result is that it has impressive bass extension, without losing anything in terms of speed and attack. Manix's *Hold Dis* is a slice of classic techno/drum and bass and has really powerful, grumbling sub-bass. Playing the AE309 at a highish volume, I fully expect it to groan under the strain – and maybe for the cones to hit their end stops. Yet it doesn't happen and the AE doesn't slur the bass notes, nor does it deliver an extra bit of boom down South, in order to swell the sound to give the impression of greater size. Indeed, it does better in the bass than it should given its fairly diminutive dimensions

and it also times better than many reflex port speaker designs of its size. The bass is deep yet even, taut and tight and remarkably devoid of lumpy colorations. The smooth, sophisticated bass extends up seamlessly to the midband, with little sense of crossing over. The midband is in turn open and detailed, giving a far wider and deeper sound than you would expect from a smallish speaker like this. Rush's *Tom Sawyer* is a joy. The AE309 conveys the intensity and passion of Neil Peart's drumming, yet neatly separates it out from all the other strands of the mix. Singer Geddy Lee's high-pitched vocals are unexpectedly smooth, and hover in the centre of the mix with confidence. On top of this, the song's multiple layers of guitars and synthesisers are all clear to hear. The best thing is how this speaker pieces everything together. The music sounds very coherent and structured, yet lyrical and lucid too.

Treble is also smooth. There's no sense of clanging metal dome tweeters, yet the tweeter conveys the sound of drumsticks on cymbals very impressively at the price.

On Karajan's reading of Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony* with the Berlin Philharmonic, there is a slight opacity right towards the rear of the hall – plus a subtle loss of atmosphere. Yet still it locates images convincingly and has a far wider soundstage than I expect given its cabinet size. Stage depth isn't great, but the music flows cogently, sounding fast and expressive, yet smooth and civilised.

Conclusion

The AE309 may look a little meek, but certainly doesn't sound it. When partnered with good amplification it delivers a very grown-up rendition of whatever type of music you choose to play. It might be pitched at an extremely competitive price point, but this floorstander will deliver your music with plenty of passion. **DP**

DETAILS

PRODUCT
Acoustic Energy
AE309

PRICE
From £999

ORIGIN
UK/China

TYPE
2.5-way
floorstanding
loudspeaker

WEIGHT
22kg

DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
175 x 900 x 280mm

FEATURES
• 1x 25mm
aluminium
dome tweeter
• 1x 130mm
mid/bass driver
• 1x 130mm
bass driver
• Quoted sensitivity:
89dB/1W/1m (6ohm)

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REVIEWED
HFC 442

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY



LIKE: Smooth, expansive sound; taut bass; musicality

VALUE FOR MONEY



DISLIKE: Nothing at the price

BUILD QUALITY



WESAY: Excellent affordable compact floorstander

EASE OF DRIVE



OVERALL

