

Acoustic Energy AE309

£999



WHAT HI-FI?
★★★★★

The AE309s certainly look the part. Their slimline cabinets, measuring 28cm wide and just under 18cm deep, each house a 28mm aluminium tweeter and a pair of 13cm mid/bass drive units configured in a 2.5-way arrangement.

The tweeters have been developed specially for Acoustic Energy's 300 series, using the company's Wide Dispersion Technology waveguides to better match dispersion to the woofers, with the promise of a wider listening sweet spot.

Those woofers feature a ceramic aluminium sandwich cone with a shallow profile and powerful long-throw motor system, and are aided in their bass response by a rear-firing slot-shaped reflex port.

These speakers harness power and range beyond their dimensions - they will fit into a snug space, but have the scale to fill a larger room. That versatility runs to the heart of the AE309s, and is echoed by their handling of music.

Patience will be rewarded

Of course, you need to give them a decent time to run in before you'll hear how capable they are - as well as screwing in the spikes included in the box - but almost immediately you'll get a sense of their innate musicality.

It's in the way everything hangs together; each piece of music is effortlessly whole. Rhythmically, the AE309s are tight but non-regimental; they can be playful and laid back when necessary, as much as they're able to hammer home a pulsing 4/4 beat.

Dynamically, they display enough range to accommodate a full orchestra but, most pleasingly, they also have that same fluid character that is comfortable conveying expression without being too up front.

It isn't the most spacious of soundstages. There is room for the music to breathe, but things are kept relatively compact so no instrument is left isolated or untethered from its cohorts.

We get a healthy dose of bass weight as well. It's not the most taut response we've heard, but that comes across as extra body rather than tubbiness; the AE309s are still capable of tracking a swift walking bassline and have the low-end punch necessary to make your guts wobble.

Rich and balanced

There is richness throughout the frequency range, extending nicely into a treble that toes the line between rolling off too much high end and allowing itself to become overly bright.

There's a comparison to be made with Neat's Iota Alpha floorstanders, in that the AE309s focus on the same kind of musicality over studiously analytical detail. Like Neat, Acoustic Energy has made an insightful pair of speakers, but these seem concerned more with conveying the mood of the music than being blindsided by resolution over expression.

A more spacious and detailed performance is available in the shape of the Award-winning Fyne Audio F501s, but you will have to spend an extra £200 for the privilege.

No fuss, plenty of fun

Passive speakers are generally plug-in-and-play, but for these Acoustic Energy towers that rings as true for their performance as much as it does for physically wiring them into your system.

This is simply a fun, well-rounded pair of floorstanders, as likeable as anything we've heard for less than a grand. We'd urge you to offer them an audition.

We are busy souls here at *What Hi-Fi?*; so there's rarely time to sit and wait for a pair of speakers to run in.

But it's testament to Acoustic Energy's AE309s that, by the time the process is complete, we've almost forgotten that we've swapped them for our usual ATC reference speakers.

Not that our ATCs are replaceable with a pair of towers costing less than a grand, but, for that jump not to be immediately noticeable, the AE309s must be a pretty capable pair of speakers.

Run them in fully and they'll reward with a warm, cohesive sound

WHAT HI-FI?

RATING ★★★★★

SOUND



COMPATIBILITY



BUILD



FOR

- Music hangs together well
- Good timing and dynamics
- Decent detail
- Plenty of bass

AGAINST

- Strong competition

VERDICT

Acoustic Energy has produced a pair of floorstanders that are instantly likeable - and never lose that quality