

Acoustic Energy Radiance Two



The Radiance Series sits just below the Reference models in Acoustic Energy's line-up and is intended to offer a good proportion of their abilities at a lower price. The Radiance Two occupies the centre of the three-strong range of stereo designs (a matching subwoofer and centre channel are also available) and utilise three drive units in a two-and-a-half-way configuration.

The two main drivers are 130mm in diameter and consist of a pressed alloy cone with matching conical dust cap, allied to a rubber surround. Both feature voice-coils wound with aluminium wire for lightness and each driver has its own enclosure with separate port tuning.

Treble is handled by a ring radiator type tweeter, where the dome is anchored both around its edge and in the centre, for better controlled motion and reduced distortion. The tweeter is located in the centre of a newly designed waveguide that Acoustic Energy calls the DXT Lens. This is said to control the unit's output very precisely to maximise high frequency dispersion, improve off-axis performance and ensure a smooth frequency response. AE also claims that the technology used in the three drive units allows a simple crossover: the circuit has no resistors at all.

The cabinets of the Radiance Twos are impressively solid and surprisingly weighty given the compact dimensions. The rear profile is curved in order to minimise internal standing waves and four outrigger zinc alloy feet bolt securely to the base to increase its footprint and allow easy spike fitment. Sadly, these are not very pretty! Cabinet finishes are Natural and Dark Ash real wood veneers.

WEIGHTY SOUND TOO

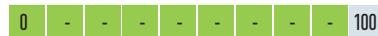
The weighty nature of the Radiances' cabinets proved to be a surprisingly apt analogy for their

sound, as these loudspeakers offer a sense of authority, scale and confidence rare at the price.

Although the Lab Report suggests bass extension is a little limited, compared to, say, the Monitor Audios, I never felt this to be so in practice. Bass was punchy, taut and superbly detailed, gripping the fretless bass from the Paul Simon album by the scruff of the neck, and capturing the rhythms perfectly.

Most notable, however, was the astounding clarity and central image stability conferred onto female vocalists. With Nanci Griffith playing, I was immediately brought the impression of her face, larger than life, hovering directly between the cabinets. Backing instrumentation was expertly arranged behind the main performers and the treble was an absolute masterclass in clarity, detail and superlative crispness.

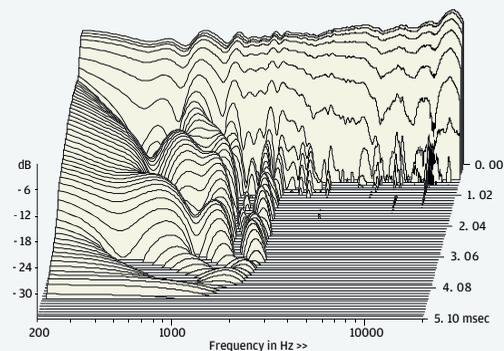
Sound Quality: 85%



LAB REPORT

Acoustic Energy claims 89dB sensitivity for the Radiance 2, which accords with our pink noise figure of 88.7dB. Nominally of 8ohm impedance, the Radiance Two has a minimum modulus of 3.7ohm, indicating that 4ohm nominal is more appropriate. Impedance phase angles are modest so EPDR (equivalent peak dissipation resistance) falls to 2.0ohm at 20Hz and 2.3ohm at a more relevant 470Hz, making this quite an easy load to drive.

The on-axis frequency response displays a rising trend, suggesting that best tonal balance will be heard a little off-axis, but response errors, 200Hz to 20kHz, are modest at ± 4.1 dB and ± 3.9 dB, and pair matching first class at ± 0.7 dB. Bass extension is fair at 56Hz (-6dB re. 200Hz) but a gentle initial roll-off from 120Hz suggests that use near a back wall is envisaged. The cumulative spectral decay [see Graph] shows a fast initial energy decay and well controlled resonances. KH



Sensitivity (SPL/1m/2.83Vrms - Mean/IEC/Music)	90.3dB / 88.7dB / 88.3dB
Impedance modulus min/max (20Hz-20kHz)	3.7ohm @ 198Hz 13.0ohm @ 2.0kHz
Impedance phase min/max (20Hz-20kHz)	-28° @ 6.8kHz 35° @ 954Hz
Pair matching (200Hz-20kHz)	± 0.7 dB
LF/HF extension (-6dB ref 200Hz/10kHz)	56Hz / >40kHz / >40kHz
THD 100Hz/1kHz/10kHz (for 90dB SPL at 1m)	0.3% / 0.2% / 0.1%
Dimensions (HWD)	920x185x255mm

GROUP TEST VERDICT

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All things considered, this is a very fine collection of loudspeakers. They ably demonstrate that spending more over some already capable budget floorstanders makes real sense, not only in terms of technological diversity, but when it comes to sound quality as well.

Considering the Dalis first, they have a great deal to recommend them, not least the superb Hybrid Tweeter Module that offers first-class treble performance and aids in an enjoyable overall balance. Unfortunately, aspects of their performance were a little overshadowed in this company and their diminutive size and weight counted against them in some areas.

Size was less of an issue for the Epos Elan 30s and these were more weighty and fulsome sounding but a little too much so at times. Certain music suited them to a tee and their remarkably neutral tweeter is most definitely a high point, as is their intelligent grille/baffle design. Personally, however, I found them rather too music-sensitive to be able to recommend them unreservedly. If you are tired of loudspeakers that sound too staid and laid back, however, they would be well worth considering.

LEADING THE PACK

The Tannoys were also frustratingly close to being superb with their magnificent bass performance leading the pack. Unfortunately some unevenness across the rest of the frequency range influenced their stereo focus at times, bringing an element of uncertainty as to which treble-strong instruments would make it to one's ears unscathed. In all, I enjoyed them and they have some undeniable strengths that will

appeal to many, even if they fell just short of true brilliance.

AND TWO EXCEL

The Elac FS147s, however, did not, their supremely well-balanced performance topped off by a gloriously revealing tweeter that managed this feat without a hint of strain or harshness. They imaged well, separating performers and instruments alike and underpinning all with a pleasingly firm bass. My only minor complaint was that this bass lacked the detail of the group leaders but as the whole package is thoroughly musically addictive, the FS147 is heartily recommended.

Bass weight and detail was not a problem for the Monitor Audios. These had both in spades thanks to their proliferation of drive units and three way configuration, and they loved to be played loud and hard.

Fortunately, when everything was reined back they continued to impress with their neutrality, clarity and

sheer musicality, even if this all was at the expense of the last degree of central image stability. Build quality was absolutely first-class and the sleek cabinets house a very intelligent driver and port design. They also romp home with the 'most speaker for your money' award.

This, then, brings us to the Acoustic Energy Radiance Twos. They

RIGHT: The £1050 Monitor Audio Silver RX8s are superb loudspeakers for the money but, for £51 less, the Acoustic Energy Radiance Twos [left] astound with their overall brilliance

may not be the largest in the group but when you factor in their superb build quality and their impressive weight, things really start to look up. Fire them up and their magnificent imagery, gloriously crisp treble and sheer verve mean that everything they play is an absolute joy to hear.

With an idealised tonal balance that favours no area of the frequency range over another, and the sort of soundstage scale that has you reaching for the specification sheet to double-check that they really are that small, the Radiance Twos demonstrate by example just what a high level of sonic satisfaction can be achieved from a £1000 outlay. ☺

'Everything the Radiance Twos play is an absolute joy'



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