



EVERYTHING BUT THE BOX TERRA II SPEAKERS

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If these cast-aluminium monitors were British they'd probably be dismissed as a gimmick or the product of a warped imagination, but since they're Bulgarian, we'll cut them some slack. **Huw Price** thinks outside the box...

If square and rectangular rooms are really that bad for acoustics, how come they work so well for speakers? The short answer is that they don't, but square-edged boxes are cheaper to manufacture so conventional speaker companies are usually forced to smooth things over using diffusers and other acoustic treatments. It is important that any enclosure is able to withstand pressure from the drive units without flexing. If it flexes, this will lead to unwanted colouration of the sound.

Conventionally, containers designed to withstand pressure are cylindrical or spherical in shape. Unfortunately, it would be impractical to fabricate a spherical speaker enclosure from traditional materials, so Everything But The Box decided to use cast aluminium instead. The result is the bizarre-looking speaker you see before you.

This little piggy

Viewed from the back, the spherical enclosure with its two stubby legs and round tail resembles the rear end of a pig. It is ported to extend the low frequencies, with the silk-domed tweeter separated off from the woofer enclosure. The casting is fixed to a curved V-shaped front baffle with three cut-outs for the woofer, tweeter and port. The latter two are enhanced visually and sonically by polished brass horns designed to disperse the sound away from the speaker, thus optimising frequency and phase linearity and creating a consistent frequency balance over a wide area.

The Terra IIs sit on three pointed brass spikes to provide acoustic isolation. As supplied they are designed for positioning about 20cm below ear level at a distance of 150cm with a backwards tilt. But the rear feet can be adjusted to bring the front panel perpendicular if you need to mount them on a workstation for nearfield monitoring. Gold-plated cable terminals located

between the back legs accept bare wire (but not banana plugs) and the function of the stubby round tail becomes clear on closer inspection: it's actually a rotating treble boost/cut control, but the +5 and -5 increments are not stepped or indented, making them rather imprecise for critical studio applications. Special mention must be made of the brass filigree work all over the enclosure. The script is hard to decipher but any Trekky with knowledge of Klingon (www.kli.org) should be able to figure it out...

Metal guru

The company literature extols the Terra II's hi-fi credentials and applications in home theatre systems, but makes no mention of studio monitoring. But then, there was probably no one more surprised than Yamaha when sound engineers started using its NS10 hi-fi speakers in such numbers. Like the Yamahas, the Terra IIs roll off at low frequencies but stay within +3dB up to 25kHz. EBTB suggests partnering the speakers with a subwoofer for full-range monitoring.

While frequency response figures are informative, you can really assess speakers only by listening to them. Straightaway we discovered that the Terra IIs are very sensitive to positioning. Care must be taken to determine the right amount of toe-in to ensure a wide stereo image with a solid and physically present centre. After initial set-up, the Terra IIs proved to be tilting back too far, but a tweak of the rear 'trotters' snapped everything into focus to produce a beguiling and involving sound.

The Terra IIs were equally adept handling classical music or brutal Massive Attack grooves, sounding, by turns, smooth or punchy and aggressive, depending on the program material. We were happy with the treble set flat in an acoustically treated room, but it's



nice to know they can be adjusted to suit various acoustic spaces.

As nearfield studio monitors they are extremely functional: imaging is precise with impressive depth, a detailed midrange and a non-fatiguing high-end response.

If you had to rely on them as your only pair of monitors it would be worth adding a subwoofer to the system, but mixes made on the speakers proved to be easy to construct and translated particularly well to other systems. One couldn't reasonably ask for more... [MTM](#)

SUMMARY

KEY FEATURES

- Frequency response: 69Hz-25kHz
- Impedance : 8Ω
- Recommended power: 30-100W
- Magnetically shielded
- Adjustable HF response
- Adjustable spiked feet

WHY BUY

- Smooth, reliable sound quality
- Highly individual looks
- High-frequency control
- Excellent imaging

WALK ON BY

- 69Hz roll-off
- High-frequency control imprecise
- Cannot be placed on their sides
- Expensive

VERDICT

Don't let the highly idiosyncratic design fool you - these monitors are serious contenders as studio monitors and sound every bit as good as they look.



TERRA II SPEAKERS

Manufacturer
Everything But The Box

Price **£1,599**

Contact **Audio State Distribution**
01933 227228

www.asproaudio.com

METHOD SPOT

What's the point?

Decoupling your monitors from their mounting surface will tighten up bottom end - but speaker spikes and fancy ceramic cones can cost a lot of money. With the Terra IIs they are supplied as standard along with brass surface protectors. Their height adjustability also ensures that they will fit into your working environment.

