

Temptation

THE WORLD'S MOST DESIRABLE KIT UNCOVERED

Terra II AMs land on Earth

Speakers designed by aliens, or maybe Damien Hirst? No, this is the work of two Bulgarian brothers

Everything But The Box Terra II AM £1500

Stereo speakers

↑ FOR

Unique styling; build and finish; exceptionally agile, articulate and detailed sonic delivery

↓ AGAINST

Design won't be to everyone's taste; a little lacking in bass weight and authority; slight treble hardness

◆◆◆ VERDICT

If they match your decor, the EBTBs are extremely capable speakers that are well worth a listen



MANY OF THE best things in life require a little commitment before they can be fully appreciated. Time and repeated exposure are often needed before one gains a taste for, say, strong cheese or opera. We're not yet sure if prolonged exposure to the curious half-piglet form of Everything But The Box's Terra II AMs will have a similar effect on the collective palate of the WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION team. You have to wonder how many homes will have a matching decor?

This curious aesthetic is actually the product of two Bulgarian brothers, Dobromir and Kamen Dobrev. Apparently, their goal was to create "no compromise compact near-field monitors with true reproduction and outstanding design". After seven years' development, they've certainly succeeded in creating a distinctive design – one that's available in five colour combinations. Check out their website at www.ebtbspeakers.com for the full, spectacular effect.

It's a fact that spherical cabinets make good acoustic sense, and the porcine rump-shaped rear of the Terra

II AMs is no exception. Getting rid of flat faces prevents the formation of standing waves, which can play havoc with midrange reproduction. The shape also reduces the zoned-in boxy sound that results from cabinet vibrations in conventional designs. Further showing the brothers' obsession with eliminating vibrations, EBTB has implemented a suspension system that aims to cancel the transfer of energy from the driver to the speaker's body.



“ This curious aesthetic is the product of a pair of Bulgarians, and seven years' work ”

Whether you like the looks or not, you can't fault the Terra II AMs' build quality. There's an obsessive attention to detail, and the use of construction methods never before applied at this price level. The aluminium rear is hand-cast, using techniques claimed to be taken from ancient jewellers, while the finish requires sanding with

three grades of abrasive paper before up to nine layers of paint and lacquer are applied. Similar effort goes into the creation of the machined MDF baffle.

Then there are the feet, port, tweeter horn and attenuator knob – lathed from solid brass – and the laser-cut stainless steel decorations, which are attached with brass rivets. They've gone so far as to line the port tube with leather to prevent 'chuffing' from air rush. In a world of assembly line speakers, the Terra II AMs are a breath of fresh air.

It would all be in vain if they didn't perform, but partnered with electronics that play to their strengths, the Terra II AMs are stunningly agile speakers that never scrimp on detail resolution. All EBTB's attention to detail has resulted in a truly out-of-the-box sound that spreads information evenly and naturally. Timing is spot-on across the range during The Hives' frenetic *See-through Head*, with an electrifying bite to every guitar strum.

Moving to Kd Lang's more delicate rendition of Joni Mitchell's *Case of You*, the vocal is breathy and articulate, and every piano pedal compression is apparent. Midrange performance is enhanced by the integration of the Terra II AMs' drivers – their phase is matched to near-perfection, giving the impression there's just one at work.

The main weakness is a slight lack of authority, due to insufficient bass depth. That's to be expected from a mid/bass driver of this size, but £1500 can buy you a bigger, richer sound. As a result, the heartbreaking cello work in the *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* soundtrack lacks the warmth to really get the tear-ducts working. There's also a fraction of hardness in the treble.

To address that weakness, we added a REL Stentor III subwoofer to the system, finding that not only did the bass improve, but also the soundstage gained depth and that hardness subsided. But, sub or no sub, you've got to hand it to those Bulgarians, they certainly know how to make speakers.

WHAT MAKES IT SPECIAL



The attenuator knob lets you to adjust treble to taste, and is beautifully made from lathed brass and laser-cut steel



The feet are made from lathed brass, and the gold-plated binding posts are from Swedish component specialist Supra



Y.e.s., that's leather beneath the stainless steel Everything But The Box logo and the curved, die-cast aluminium handle

TECH SPECS

TYPE 2-way front-port bass reflex
HF DRIVER 27mm silk dome
MID/BASS DRIVER: 10cm NdFe
BIWIRABLE No
MAGNETICALLY SHIELDED Yes
RESPONSE 69Hz-25kHz (±3dB)
IMPEDANCE 8 ohms
SENSITIVITY 86dB/w/m
DIMENSIONS 38 x 18 x 28cm
WEIGHT 6.5kg