

# ALREADY THERE





▲ Progressive audio further optimizes the chassis supplied by Seas via active crossovers.



▲ Extremely broadband transformer meets Class-D-Amp – without generation conflict.

Progressive Audio boss Koenen waited patiently until someone could build him a chassis according to his wishes – and then equipped the Extreme 1 Active with it.

**W**ord has got around that Ralf Koenen does not rely on common solutions off the shelf, but likes to tailor his products by hand – with more than considerable success. The new Extreme 1 Active is no exception, but quite the opposite.

### From Seas for Progressive

The coaxial chassis, consisting of a large magnesium diaphragm for the mid/low frequency range and a fabric dome tweeter for the treble at its center, is, however simple it may seem at first glance, a small technical masterpiece.

With a series accuracy of 1% exclusively manufactured by Seas for Koenen, the chassis has been fitted a voice coil with an especially long stroke. In addition, the Essen-based craftsman has pimped the already ingenious piece of technology a considerable bit further for the active version.

With his active model, Koenen makes skillful use of the concept's potential by actively equalizing the already good and linear frequency response of the driver, while at the same time successfully fighting residual resonances and reducing the distortion to impressively low values, even on louder-than-usual levels. The dynamic scope is therefore even wider than in the passive version.

As expected, the Extreme 1 Active has, fortunately, not become a disco-speaker. This gem is made to forget the technology and devote oneself entirely to the music. Company director Ralf Koenen promises that a realistic bass and fundamental range will be reproduced even at low

volume levels and that all subtleties will remain audible right up to the limit of the speaker's capacity without compression effects – an assessment that we can confirm without hesitation after days of listening sessions. Naturally, the path to sound enjoyment leads through technology, but it is of no use if the ear isn't granted the final say during development. Let's still take another quick look at what makes good sound possible from a technical perspective: the active crossover was not built up digitally and equipped with DSPs like elsewhere. Koenen rather relies on a purely analog filtering with 18 dB edge steepness and so-called "Butterworth filter characteristics".

The two symmetrically driven class-D-power amplifiers each deliver 100 watts and have a very compact design. If you want to give the high frequency range a little kick, you can slightly increase it by 1 dB using the toggle switch. Should a grounding problem occur, the ground lift switch helps to interrupt the loop without compromising electrical safety. The speaker provides

connection to the sources via RCA or XLR sockets, whereby Koenen uses an extremely high-quality and broadband input transformer from his own production, which is to operate linearly up to 100 kHz. The "current coupling technology with galvanic isolation of the input" should result in a low and even load on the connected sources. Problems such as capacitance, inductance and a constant characteristic impedance, which Koenen believes are widely underestimated for the elimination of reflected and stray currents, are a thing of the past. As a result,

#### KEYWORD

**Butterworth filters:** Filter in which the frequency response has an even (smooth) response in the pass-band as well as in the stopband.

the sound image is to become significantly more precise and “acoustic ghost images” are to be eliminated.

The acrylic cabinet is specially baked and pressed as well as trimmed for low resonance with various struts. The optionally available and fillable stand has gone through the same production process.

Koenen has subordinated everything to the goal of making a loudspeaker which, due to an exact time/impulse behavior, completely fades into the background and lets the music unfold freely but precisely focused in the room. However, two important conditions should absolutely be fulfilled: the cover, which is actually more of a transport guard for the noble chassis, must be removed and an isosceles triangle should be formed between the speakers and the listener. The frequency response suggests a parallel alignment of the speakers for maximum tonal balance, but in practice also angling to the listener was an alternative – just try out what suits your personal preferences, as both variants have their appeal.

**The environment**

We chose our reference preamplifier from Accoustic Arts, which was supplied with music and power symmetrically via Audioquest cables from T+A’s outstanding player 3100. The passing on of the signals was also done by the US cables, while the speakers were powered by cables from Essen. We then built up the little speakers in the 40 m2 listening room and marveled at how elegantly they moved through the test.

The first obstacle was Herb Alpert’s classic “Taste Of Honey”, but the Progressive Audio surmounted the hurdle of spatial representation, attack and tonal neutrality with ease due to its mixture of airiness, power, cleanliness in all frequency ranges and a never annoying, fully natural and warm sounding style. The stereo panorama was wide-ranging, yet all the musicians were finely divided, clearly separated

from each other in the room. Bass runs were easy to hear through and structured, details could be clearly discerned right down to the reverb and the slight humming of a musician in “Tangerine”, whereby the illustration even reached beyond the base width.

**Only dainty from the outside**

In “Bittersweet Samba” the presentation convinced with the gripping mediation of the finely woven rhythm structures. You have a soft spot for voices? Then I don’t have to say much about Ella Fitzgerald. The live-recorded 68’ album “Sunshine Of Your Love” shows the exceptional artist with an enormous range: orchestra on side 1, where she presents herself in the title song as a real power woman who screams her soul out of her body, full of energy, presumably having been a role model for Janis Joplin’s development of her own style. Fitzgerald’s size and body volume are very well perceivable and are credibly projected into the room, the soul-feeling carries you away.

Mrs. F. then also shows the variability of her voice on side 2, where she plays with the Tommy Flanagan Jazz Trio. In “A House Is Not A Home” she is sometimes airy, sometimes seductive and lascivious, sometimes energetic, then again whispering, here strong, there weak; she shows why she is considered being perhaps the best jazz singer of all times.

With Lincoln Mayorga & Collegues a direct-cut jewel lay on the great Technics turntable. The advantages of this recording technique, such as explosive and immediate dynamics and the live interaction of all musicians, come into their own here. When Jim Keltner works on his drums on “America” from the “West Side Story”, the last bit of pressure from the drums might be missing, but still it is absolutely gripping, because the structure of the reproduction is convincing – like the whole loudspeaker.

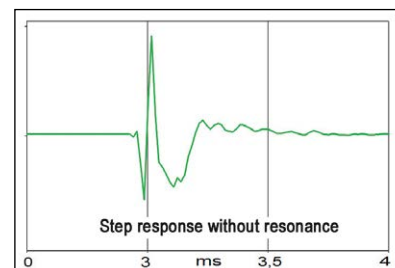
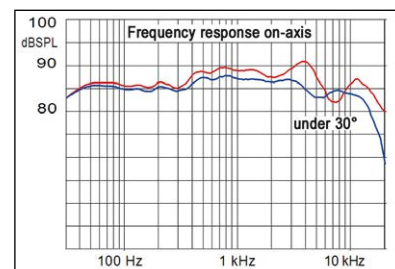
*Michael Lang*

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**MEASUREMENT RESULTS**



Lower cut-off frequency (-3dB SPL)	41 Hz
Distortion factor at 63/3k/10k Hz	1/0.3/0.3 %
Power Consumption Stby/empty.	(at) /7.5 W

**LAB COMMENTS**

Frequency response balanced below 30°; very deep for the size. Distortion values low. First-class step response. Remove cover during operation! Installation tip: isosceles triangle, slightly angled.

**FEATURES**

Coax chassis, XLR and RCA connectors; automatic power-on, ground lift switch, tweeter adjustment +1 dB switchable; optional stand

**STEREO-TEST**

**SOUND QUALITY** **95%**

**PRICE/PERFORMANCE**

★ ★ ★ ★ ☆

**EXCELLENT**