

THE BIG AMONG THE SMALL



The term „compact“ loudspeaker may hardly be used to describe ELAC’s brand new Adante AS-61. The sound, however, benefits from its size. And there’s anyway a lot more to it than you might think.

Some time ago they were rather common: speakers with a height of almost 50 centimeters and a corresponding width, which belonged on a stand that was not too high. Such formats hardly exist anymore nowadays. Except for a handful of British traditionalists like Spondor or Harbeth the expansive “shelf loudspeaker” is no longer relevant.

But as we know trends from the past are all coming back, especially, though not exclusively, in the HiFi-world. Hence, it isn’t as far fetched to believe that ELAC might have just been the first of many to realize an upcoming trend with their comparatively lavishly dimensioned and full 20 kilogram heavy Adante AS-61. The German specialist confidently announces its giant baby as “your new reference monitor” on its website. Well, let’s see and hear first...

Approved hands

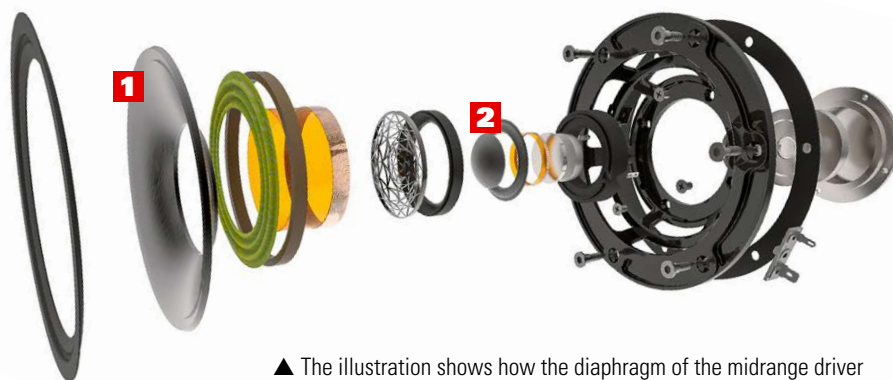
The fact that the AS-61 was designed by US guru Andrew Jones, who has already developed some convincing models for the north Germans, makes things even

more exciting. Jones is not only known for his clever in detail solutions but also for always keeping an eye on costs. A pair of Adante in high-gloss white, black, or rosewood veneer, nevertheless isn’t particularly cheap at a price of just under 3000 euro. However, considering the effort and expense involved, as well as the processing quality achieved, notice the unusually elaborate front cover, the price still seems favorable. The ELAC-typical first-class cabinet is immaculately painted, and the solid baffle is made of black anodized, finely brushed aluminum.

At first sight one recognizes two drivers. That is, however, only half the truth. To begin with, the upper driver actually are two coaxial drivers, as the tweeter’s fabric dome, measuring 25 millimeters, is located in the center of the 13.5cm aluminum cone of the midrange driver. Secondly, the supposed woofer is only a passive cone of 20cm. Its driver – a 16.5er bass driver which is also equipped with a rigid aluminum cone – works invisibly inside the airtight loudspeaker.



▲ Andrew Jones, shown here with one in white, is the spiritual father of the Adante AS-61.



▲ The illustration shows how the diaphragm of the midrange driver **1** surrounds the fabric dome tweeter **2**. Both drivers have individual drives consisting of voice coil and magnet system.

TEST-COMPONENTS

MULTIPLAYER: T+A MP3100HV
PRE-/POWER AMPLIFIER: Accoustic Arts Tube Preamp II MK2/Amp II-MK3
INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER: NAD C388, Symphonic Line RG14 Edition
SPEAKERS: Dynaudio Contour 20
CABLE: HMS Gran Finale Jubilee (Bi-Wire)

The reason for the coaxial solution of the mids and trebles is obvious: this way the higher frequencies, which are important for spatial localization, have a common acoustic center, supposedly avoiding phase errors and ensuring a coherent, three-dimensional image. This might well be categorized as general hifi knowledge, although the matter is, of course, much more complex in reality. It is, for example, very important to avoid annoying diffraction phenomena in the form of exaggerations and cancellations, which happen due to the identical distances of the generated sounds to all corners and edges. The gently funnel-shaped sound guidance around the coax driver is supposed to help there.

Pressure and control

For the bass, Jones considered how to make optimum use of the sound radiated from the woofer to the front and back and how to control the signal as best as possible. The result was the solution implemented in the AS-61, in which the active woofer drives the passive cone placed directly in front of it via the air cushion between them. This is particularly effective here because the rear sound pressure is channeled into another compartment, which is connected to the front by two precisely calculated reflex tubes.

In practice, the driver pushes the enclosed air volume of both chambers back and forth via the defined mechanical resistance of the reflex tubes. This way,

the total amount of energy is supposed to be utilized even better than, for example, with a “normal” bass reflex concepts, which is all the more important in a compact speaker, where the bass boosting volume is naturally limited.

It is clear that the Adante AS-61 is not meant to be placed on the floor, despite its relative size. However, it would be equally inadequate to place them on a shelf or sideboard. Then, the nearby wall would, first of all, create an excess of bass, which is not underrepresented anyway, while also causing blur-effects and uncleanliness in the three-dimensionality of the mid-heights and trebles due to reflections. Both would be a pity, especially as the ELAC is actually capable of outstanding performances in both areas.

In order for this to be audible, they should be set up free-standing on a proper base, such as the German’s offer in the ABST-101 (around 600 Euro/pair). This stand can be firmly screwed to the speaker and already weighs almost twelve kilograms without the sand filling that additionally ensures both stability and low levels of resonance. Four solidly made spikes, adjustable in height and fixed to the thick base plate by means of counter disks, as well as matching floor protectors are included in the scope of delivery. Assuming the loudspeaker cable is not too thick, it can be led discreetly through the rear of the two support struts.

Powerplay? Easy!

Operated as described above, the Adante AS-61 was even able to properly fill the large STEREO listening room, which is normally not the preferred biotope for speakers of the compact sort. The German conveyed Maria Pihls expressive piece “Malvina” in a strong and powerful way. The bass was in no way exaggerated, but instead potent and sustaining

– and surprisingly rich in shades, which

is not at all a matter of course in constructions using internal drivers and passive diaphragms. Often enough one has heard them sound lively, but nevertheless somehow uniformly “pumping” especially on



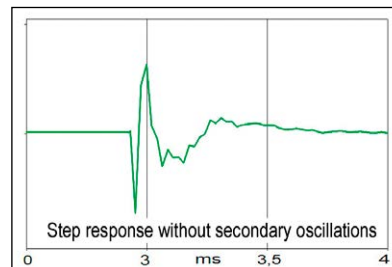
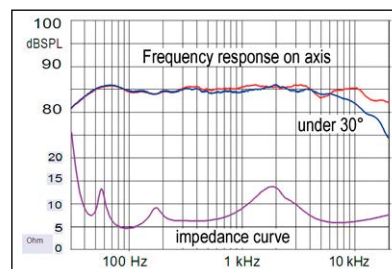
Instead of the usual fabric-covered MDF frame, there is an elaborate cover. ►

ELAC ADANTE AS-61

around 3000 € (available in high-gloss white or black and rosewood veneer)
 Dimensions: 25 x49 x42 cm (WxHxD)
 Warranty: 2 years
 Contact ELAC, Phone: +49 431 647740
 www.elac.de

This ELAC isn't another ordinary speaker. It knows how to convert its size into bass volume, for which a system of internal woofer and intelligently coupled passive cone contributes. The coax driver for midrange and treble guarantees high plasticity. It is astonishingly cheap for this kind of performance.

MEASUREMENT RESULTS



DC resistance	4 Ω
Minimum impedance	4.8 Ω at 95 Hz
Maximum impedance	26 Ohm at 30 Hz
Sound pressure level (2.83 V/m)	84.1 dB SPL
Power for 94 dB SPL	20 W
Lower cut-off frequency (-3dB SPL)	42 Hz
Distortion factor at 63/3k/10k Hz	0.3/0.1/0.1 %

LAB COMMENTS

The frequency response is extremely linear and without any drops, which is a particular challenge for coaxial systems. Outside the axis, the treble drops slightly, the AS-61 should therefore be angled to the listening position. The efficiency is pleasingly good for a speaker with an internal driver. Still, the ELAC likes powerful amplifiers whose stability is nevertheless not put to the test due to the tame impedance curve. Precise step response..

STEREO-TEST

SOUND QUALITY	98%
PRICE/PERFORMANCE	
OUTSTANDING	



▲ The connection panel equipped with four high-quality terminals allows bi-wiring and bi-amping. For the hearing test, we removed the sound-reducing metal bridges.

their resonance frequency. None of this can be ascribed to the AS-61, which clearly showed the finest nuances in the color and level gradations of all test pieces. Of course, everyone has to decide for themselves how important this is for the naturalness of a reproduction. Fact is: without knowing the ELAC's bass principle, I would have thought it was a finely tuned closed speaker!

Now, does that still work when things get intense? A real challenge is always Monty Alexander's highly dynamic "Moanin'", which is flavored with some substantial bass blows. It is unbelievable how stress-free the AS-61 parried the attacks of the powerful Accoustic Arts amplifier. Only very few compact speakers could deal with this in a way as relaxed and effortless as presented here.

Master of nuances

However, these Elacs are probably rather unlikely to be purchased as the basis of a home disco system. Rather, the customers expect highest audiophile virtues from them. And this is where the Adante really are at home, as they complement their

striking, rugged bass with equally accentuated higher frequencies. While descriptive adjectives the likes of "dissolved", "delicately aromatic" or "homogeneous" do generally fit, one should, indeed must, apply more accurate criteria, which are more than a simple inflation of these terms.

The Adante are, probably not least due to their coax drivers, able to produce sound spectra that are largely detached from their cabinets, but which are never diffuse and instead absolutely razor sharp. Singers and instruments are so vividly reproduced that sometimes one has the impression to be able to hear "around" them.

The group delay seems to be very exact, meaning that the processing of different frequencies takes place in a very narrow time frame. Is this the case, then the electric guitar and especially the stuffed trumpet in Beat Kaestlis "Day In Day Out" are clearly located on the left, outside the base. To reproduce this, you need an extremely phase-exact loudspeakers and the AS-61, slightly angled towards the listener as intended, did the trick with flying colors.

Once warmed up, the ELAC realized guitar strums seemingly out of nowhere. The hard beaten vibraphone in "Saturday Night" of the Red Norvo Quintet, which is defined down to the plop of the hard rubber mallets, appeared in a broad panorama, leaving plenty of room for the band, and clearly separating the audience's quiet conversation-fragments from the front edge of the stage. That's the way it is supposed to be!

Whatever "serious" titles we played: Andrew Jones' Adante not only remained on top of any situation, but always appeared even more mature than its luxuriant dimensions and price range let expect. This makes the AS-61 indeed a big among the small ones. It really has what it takes to become "your new reference monitor"!

Matthias Böde