

PAUL MAC
*listens to the latest,
and possibly the
greatest, small
active monitors to
emerge from the
Genelec camp.*



While the audio industry's new product conveyor-belt has no shortage of monitors coming down the line, no one can be nonchalant about a new range from Genelec. The brand-spanking 8000 Series of two-way active monitors consists of three models: the 8030A (285mm tall), the 8040A (350mm tall), and the 8050A (433mm tall). They certainly look different — and apparently it's for good reason. The aluminium die-cast shell hides a host of new features, including a new rear port design, new drivers, improved amplifiers, and more. And all for nought, unless they sound better...

The first thing I've noticed on a couple of demos and more intensive listening during the review is the awesome imaging that these speakers are capable of. You have to hear it to believe it, but the phantom centres were solid and crisp; the drivers themselves rarely gave their positions away — except with some older material where the

these monitors the midrange fits in without a glitch and doesn't get swallowed by the crossover. The Genelec literature does point to an admirable 12dB improvement in the middle band over previous models — maybe that's a large part of it, but I suspect it's more that the package is wholly improved.

Sorry, but I did try very hard to trip these monitors up — and failed. A small part of me hoped that maybe the LF would be rubbish. It's actually very good. Most people expect limitations from small monitors in this regard — sometimes the bass just isn't there, sometimes it sounds more and more compressed, muddled, or noisy as ballast is piled on. Well, the limitations of small monitors have just been pushed out a little further. In the specs, the LF takes a downturn at 45Hz (55Hz for the 8030A and 35Hz for the 8050). In practice, don't Apollo 440 have some great bass sounds? Never really noticed before...

GENELEC

8040A

ACTIVE MONITORS

panning was not exactly imaginative. Listening to a Telarc SACD with the Dave Brubeck quartet and LSO, with my head down, I thought for a moment that I'd found a chink in the imaging — a male voice, jumping straight from the right-side driver? Not a bit of it — looking up I realised that he was singing from a point just to the left of that driver, with no shake, and no spread. You can twist around in your chair all day, but the image stays just where you left it. Another great aspect of that source is an outstanding stereo miked piano. Why so great? While listening to it through the 8040s, I could've put my finger on any key. It's just a shame that I didn't have the chance to try a 5.1 system to really put the imaging through the mill.

Another good indication of spectral cohesion and dynamics is the reproduction of 'space'. Whether it's natural reverb or artificial, the tails are a give-away when it comes to this kind of detail. Again, the 8040's shone, with some stereo recordings bringing the recorded space to life — I love the idea that a good monitor and a good recording can help you visualise a room or a venue. If you can hear a reverb tail reach its end without it being rudely interrupted by noise, or without breaking up because the monitor has left it nowhere to go, you're on a winner.

I've heard a handful of exceptional mid-ranges amongst the smaller monitor class. My own bugbear with this aspect in many models I've listened to is that the mid-range, while it is often clear, somehow doesn't always fit in. Normally it's obvious from the moment you plug-in that something isn't right. I'm not sure, but I suspect it comes down to a balance between technical linearity and accuracy, and the foibles of that middle, transient portion of our aural sensitivity. In any case, the 8040s performed extremely well. So long as guitars and organs, and certain voices don't sound like they've got their own special 'sparkle speaker' I'm normally happy. In

I've only got a little bit of room to say that these units look great — curved on all sides. They only stand up because of a rubber foot/bracket arrangement that Genelec has called the 'Iso-Pod'. Not only does it stop the speakers rolling around the studio (nope, didn't try it, but I'm sure someone will), it de-couples them, and allows you to tilt the monitor. The connections at the rear are made in a cut-out panel, and you push the XLRs and power lead 'under and up' so the bodies of the connectors don't stick out and the cables hang down. There's response adjustment on dip switches and a preset for overall gain adjustment.

Conclusion

As always, you have to take all these comments in context. These are not large monitors, and would not replace large monitors, though they are exceptional small monitors. Given that proviso, in many respects they could be the best small active monitors I've heard. They do defy their size (or at least the normal expectation of speakers this size), the ergonomics are impressive, and the quality of output is a delight. □

INFORMATION

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