



Unity Audio



The Rock

Can Unity Audio's debut in the active studio monitor market really Rock your world? John Pickford hears the truth.

The Rock

Manufacturer **Unity Audio**

Price £1,899 pair

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Unity Audio are distributors of professional audio equipment, established in 1995 by Kevin Walker. In more recent times the company has branched out into the field of monitor design and manufacture, with The Rock being the company's first product to market. Measuring 325 x 220 x 290mm (HWD) and weighing in at 11.2kg, The Rock is a two-way active monitor powered by a 100-watt discrete bi-polar amplifier. An infinite-baffle design (there's no bass reflex port), The Rock incorporates two Elac drivers in a sealed cabinet made from high-quality Baltic birch plywood and fitted with a very attractive front baffle manufactured from corian – a material more commonly used to make kitchen worktops. The 180mm (6.5-inch) mid/bass driver features a 0.2mm aluminium foil bonded to a pulp-fibre cone, while the tweeter is a folded ribbon design that makes use of a new neodymium magnetic system. The rear panel provides for balanced XLR input and unbalanced phono input, and a socket for an IEC power lead sits below the on/off switch. A rotary pot is also provided for gain adjustment.

On track

We spent a considerable amount of time evaluating these monitors, using familiar commercial recordings and, in

Key Features

- Bespoke 100-watt onboard amplifier
- 50Hz–35kHz frequency response
- Folded ribbon tweeter
- Gain control
- Balanced XLR and unbalanced phono inputs

Measuring Up

Adam Audio supplies a range of active monitors, the smallest being the Adam S1X (£1,698 pair). This features the company's X-ART (Extended Accelerating Ribbon Technology) tweeters driven by an in-house-designed Class-A/B amplifier. The S1X is a front-ported design fitted with a 6-inch HexaCone woofer driven by a PWM amplifier.



a professional capacity, while tracking and mixing. Right from the start it was obvious that The Rock is a very special monitor indeed. Its real forte is timing – they are extremely fast-sounding speakers that allow rhythms to flow in a fleet-footed way that most monitors

There's no denying that if your mix isn't happening, this monitor will let you know about it

can only dream of. Several factors are responsible for this. Firstly, because the cabinet is sealed you don't get the unwanted chuffing noises commonly heard emanating from many ported designs. This helps to keep the bottom end nice and tight, making bass lines easy to follow. Although the speaker doesn't do subsonics – remember that this is a smallish near-field monitor – The Rock has all the bass you could realistically wish for, and what it may lack in quantity it more than makes up for in terms of quality (it has super-clean bass).

Dynamics is another area in which the monitor excels, in no small part due to the superb onboard amplifier designed by Tim De Paravicini, one of the world's most respected amplifier designers. The Rock has the ability to reveal very subtle dynamic shifts – micro-dynamics, if you like – with trip-hammer speed and precision.

Perhaps the most obvious aspect of its character is their ability to delve deep into a mix and pull out every last ounce of detail. Unity Audio states that

The Rock was designed to be 'brutally honest' – and there's no denying the fact that if your mix isn't happening, this monitor will certainly let you know about it. Flattery will get you nowhere.

Top tweets

This level of detail is the result of integrating the excellent Elac Jet ribbon tweeter seamlessly with the mid/bass driver. Ribbons are renowned for outstanding transient response characteristics and superior treble extension, but few designers manage to integrate them well to create a coherent loudspeaker. You end up with a messy two-speakers-coming-out-of-one-box sound that seems to plague many active designs that employ ribbon tweeters. The Rock does not fall into this trap. What you get is an honest, accurate presentation that allows you to hear precisely what's going on within a recording, making the task of placing instruments (and voices) in a mix easy. And you can work with them for long periods without experiencing listening-fatigue, such is the absence of muddle.

We are deeply impressed by The Rock. It is rare to hear a monitor of this type sound so cohesive and truthful while displaying a musicality that makes listening pure pleasure. Unity designer Kevin van Green must be congratulated for pulling off a trick that escapes most designers of ribbon-sporting active speakers. We are still using Rocks at the time of writing, and if we are to be as brutally honest as them, we really, really don't want to give them back... **MTM**

MTM Verdict

WHY BUY

- + Accurate, detailed sound
- + Superb timing abilities
- + Attractive and well-built

WALK ON BY

- If you can't handle the truth...

The Rock is among the best studio monitor we've heard regardless of size or price, enabling you to create sounds and mixes with pin-point precision. A supremely honest and engaging professional monitor.

