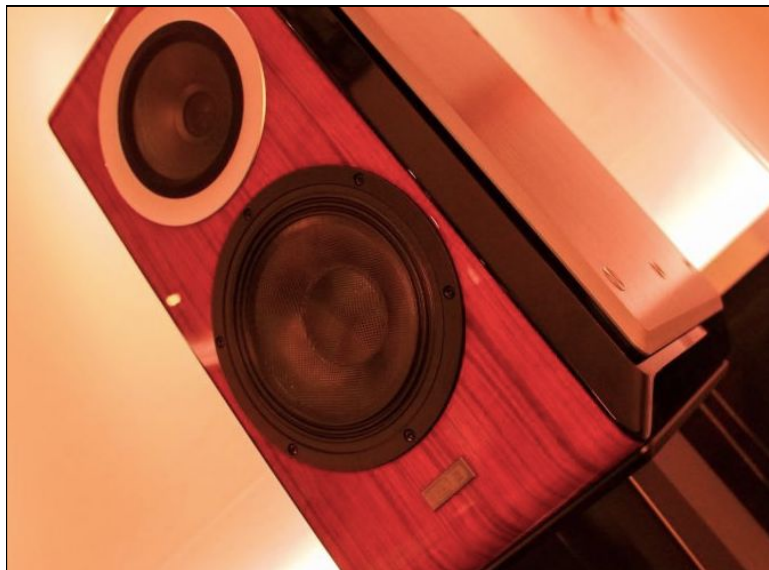


TAD CE1TX monitor off the scale



Pros

- Insane build quality
- Very neutral
- Insightful display
- Layering

Cons

- Pricy
- The whole chain must be appropriate

Price: € 36000

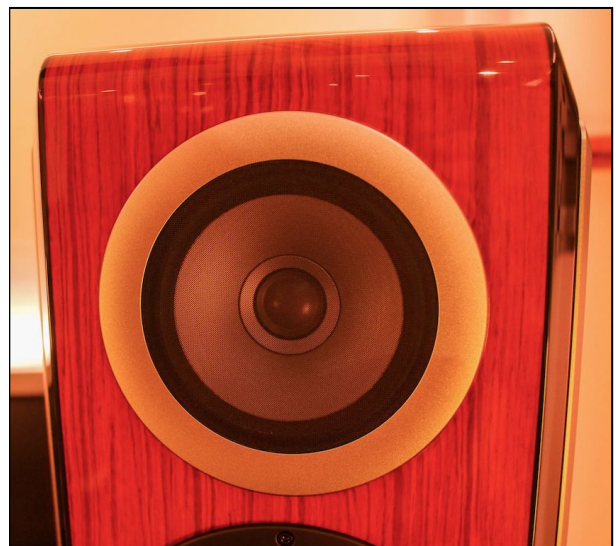


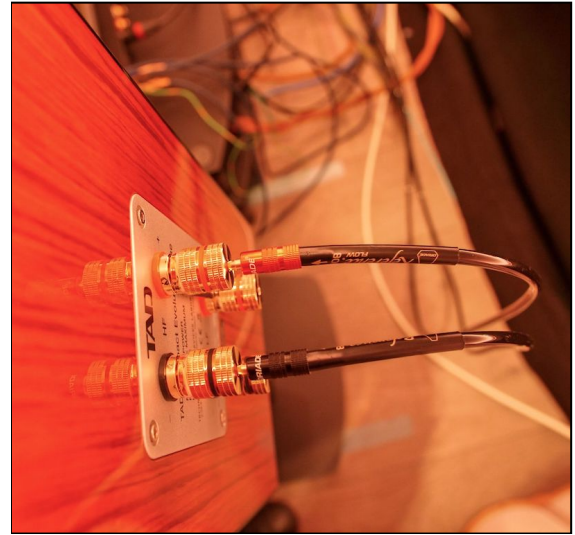
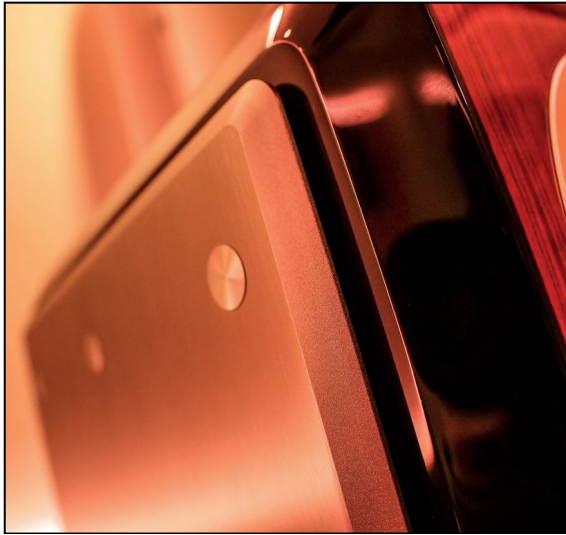
The Japanese brand TAD we know pretty well at Alpha Audio. Well before we started using our own TAD E2s in the reference system, we enjoyed those (sort of) wacky speakers with their famous coax drivers a few times at shows and demos. We now have the 'Compact Evolution 1 TX' in the listening room. Although TAD calls them 'Compact', you should take that with a large grain of salt.... they are anything but small.

TAD stands for Technical Audio Devices. It is a Japanese manufacturer of speakers and electronics. The brand stems from the founder of the well-known Pioneer brand. The TAD project was established in 1975, which makes the brand almost 50 years old now. During those years, TAD has refined the coaxial driver and has also taken a firm grasp of beryllium technology. Look at models like the R1 or the E2 that certainly don't show any sharpness in the treble area. Provided the rest of the chain is clean and controlled of course.

The TAD CE1TX – supplied for this review by [Audiofeel](#) – is the “Compact Evolution series 1” monitor. Above the Evolution is still the Reference series. Now, at some point we too get the feeling, ‘how can this be improved?’ Well... that definitely applies to this monitor from TAD: the speed, transparency, ease and sophistication is undoubtedly impressive. But we are getting ahead of ourselves.

Layout





The TAD CE1TX is a monitor model with a coaxial driver for the mid and high – the TAD CST driver (Coherent Source Transducer) and a MACS II woofer for the bass. Thus, it is a three-way model. The tweeter is beryllium. It extends to an impressive 100 kHz. The mid driver is magnesium and the woofer is created from five layers of woven and non-woven aramid fibers. The reason they are non-woven and woven is the improved damping characteristics.

TAD does not directly use a bass reflex system, but it is vented. TAD calls this a bidirectional ADS port. These are behind the metal panels on the sides of the speaker. This bidirectional system is supposed to counteract port noise. The E2 has partially adopted that system, but there it is in the base of the speaker.

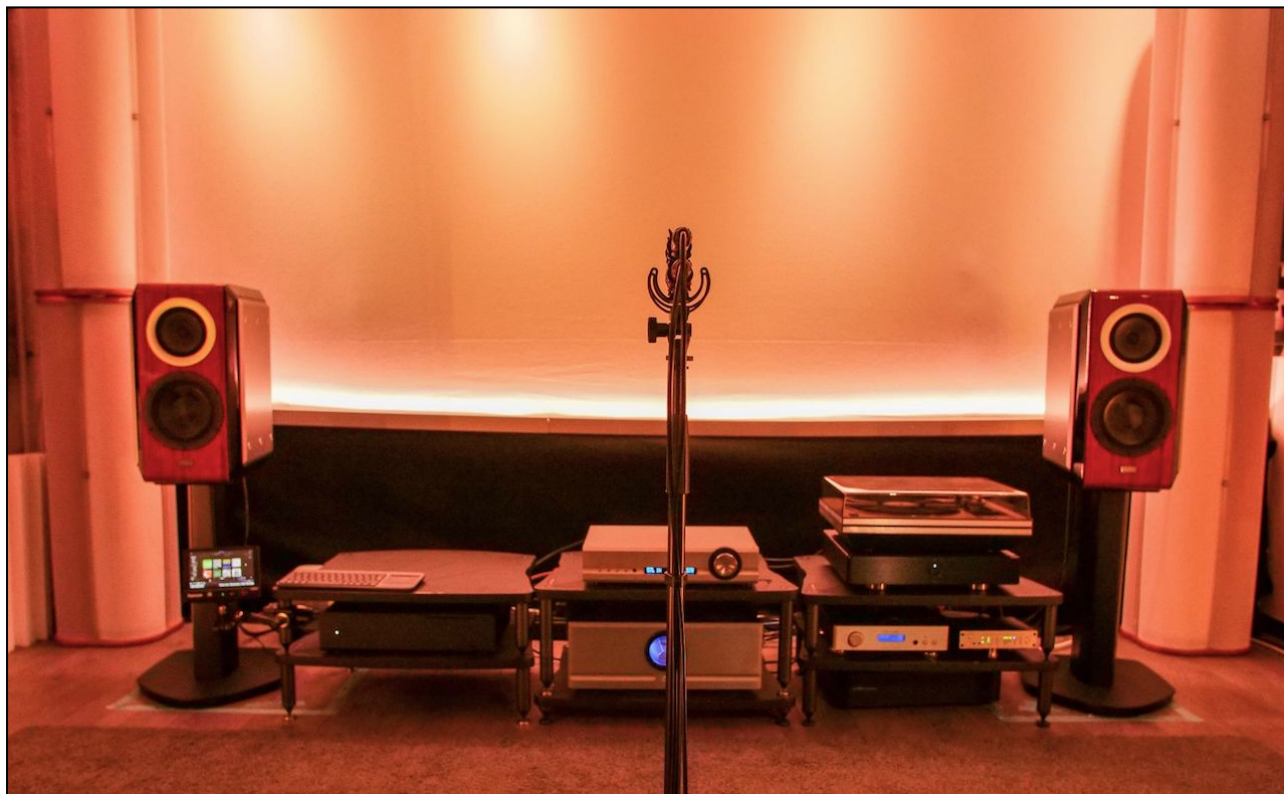
The finish of the heavy cabinet (29Kg each and a mixture of MDF and plywood) is, in a word, **sublime**. It is absolutely a work of art. It fits seamlessly into many an interior and will also be a positive eye-catcher. The high gloss finish fits this speaker beautifully and gives an incredibly luxurious feel. Which it should, considering the price. The color scheme is also very successful, with the metal side plates fitting beautifully. Top notch.

TAD also has a pair of (19Kg) stands that you can order with it. These obviously fit perfectly and offer the possibility of securing the monitors, which is nice. The stands also have spikes and cups. Mount these, as the difference is definitely audible in more air in the imaging. Experimenting with other decouplers is also possible, of course. [Our experience with AAI is good with the TAD E2s.](#)

We let the TAD CE1TX monitors burn in in the Alpha Cinema for a few days. Just to be sure, because they already played for more than a week at AudioFeel. Then we moved it to the main system. During the 'burn in days', we noticed that the speaker sounds very nice in the cinema as well. Now the Illusonic is a wonderful processor, but the power amplifier is nothing special; it is a 7-channel surround power amplifier. And yet it sounds anything but lousy. That promises something!

The test setup

- Pass Labs XP-12 and X150.8
- Sonnet Pasithea
- Mutec MC3+ reclocker with AAI pucks
- Alpha Audio PC with Jcat USB and Ethernet cards
- Pura Audio Dodo PSU (5V) for the JCat cards
- Grimm TPM cabling
- Driade Flow cabling (speaker / interlinks)
- Isotek filters(Titan / Aquarius)
- YETI Power cables
- Driade Flow Reference 808
- Van den Hul Nova speaker cable



The Sound

What does a “monitor” speaker from TAD sound like? Well: clean. Really everything comes at us without any distraction or coloration. Partly because of this, it’s immediately clear that TAD has one foot in the studio. We could mix and master perfectly on these speakers. Every layer is audible and trackable. And without any effort on our part. It’s an experience we wish everyone had once.

Layering

Now we again mention layering. Something we also described in the review of the [TAD Evolution 2](#). It is – we estimate – a characteristic of a TAD speaker. And it’s something your author finds incredibly important. After all, it gives a nice glimpse *into* the music. It lets you hear what a song is made of... the structures. the interplay. For your author, it brings out the soul in the music. So if a speaker can reproduce that well, that’s a big plus. A TAD does that very nicely. And I’m sure there will be other speakers that can do it beautifully as well.

Sound balance

Do not expect a spectacle of sparkling treble and roaring bass when you press ‘Play’. If that is what you are looking for, you can skip this TAD and look at other brands that might offer that. The TAD is not a carnival attraction and mostly brings balance and calmness to the reproduction. However, as previously reported in an [opinion piece](#) by your author, don’t confuse this with boring. For the TAD CE1TX is anything but boring. Indeed, it is a reproducer that lets us look incredibly deep into the music. And we find that very fascinating. The point with this monitor is that it never tires and everything remains very correct. The bass, mids and treble flow perfectly together so you really feel that there is one unit playing. So is this the ideal point source, but in a 3-way configuration?

Because of the fine balance across the spectrum and the calmness with which this speaker knows how to present itself, practically everything can be played. We have played Mammal Hands, Amélie, Radiohead, Massive Attack and Bjorn Riis, for example. The great thing is that the system moves completely with the music. The TAD E2 already does that, but the CE1TX manages to do so with even more conviction. It is also clear after a few tracks that the CE1TX is a class above the E2’s.

There is really more resolution and the CE1TX is clearly even more neutral in the midrange. That's not a bad thing: you get what you pay for... right?

Imaging

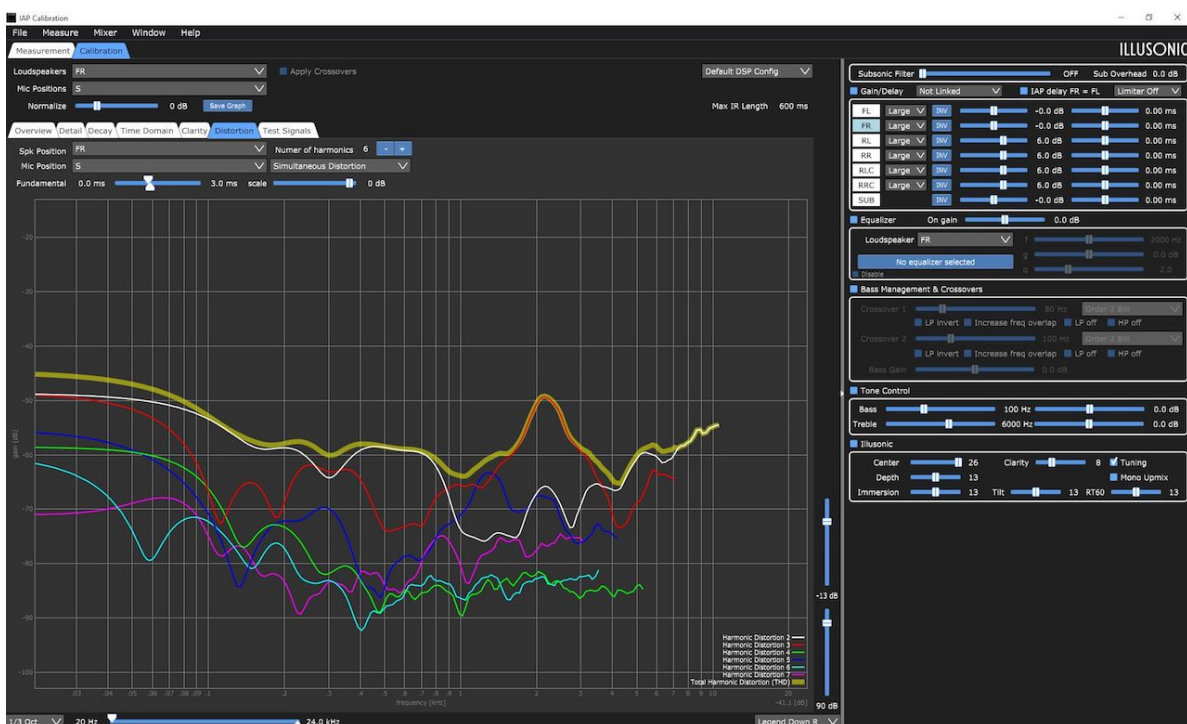
Finally, a word about imaging. Now we are already quite used to stereo imaging. The TAD E2s do that very nicely and also the Focal Sopra No1 was very precise with the placement of voices. The E2s play a bit bigger, especially on the Pass Labs X150.8 which can create a wonderful music-bubble. The TAD CE1TX takes it up a notch. It is not bigger than the E2s in our room, but what is immediately noticeable is how tight and – very strange perhaps – *clean* the imaging is. It's incredibly sharp and bizarrely stable. That helps enormously with the sense of realism. When Julia Stone is singing in front of me I would almost believe that she is really standing there. Yes... cliché, but very much true. It's really beautiful!

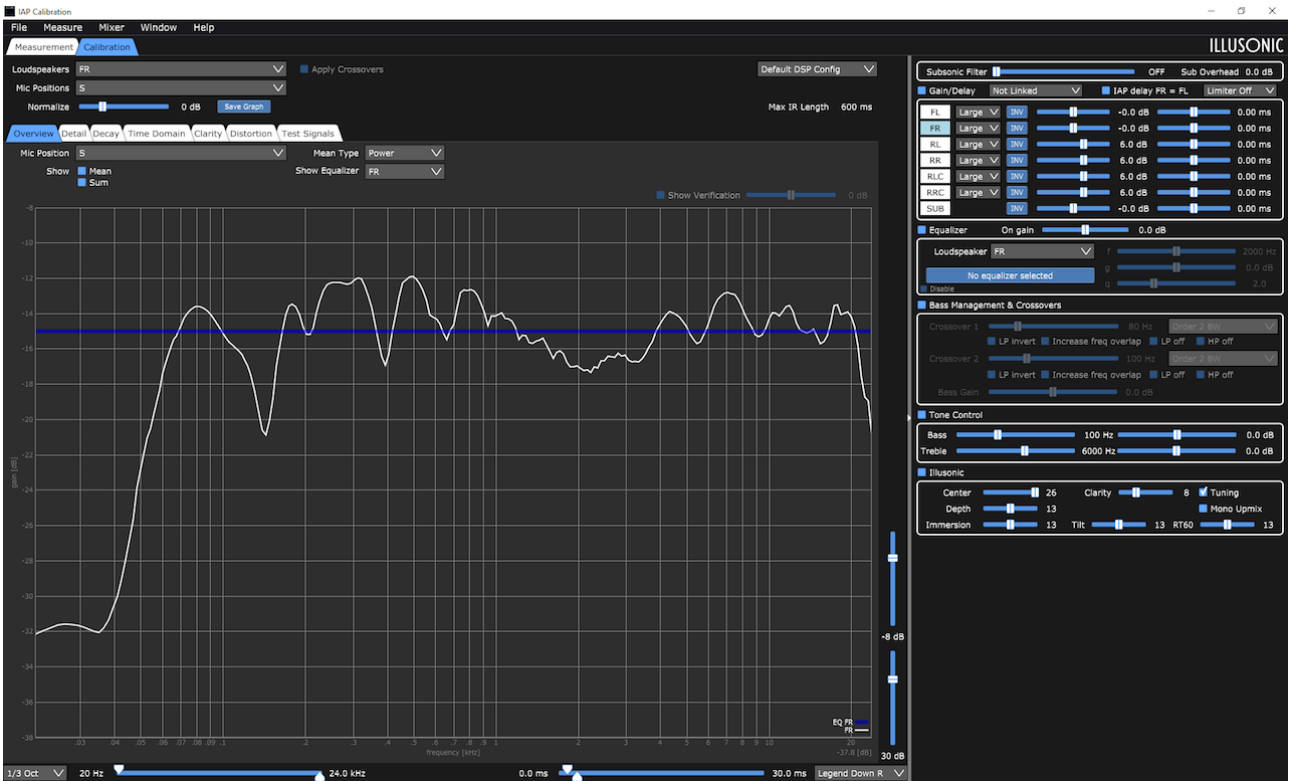
Conclusion and Measurements TAD CE1tx

We measured the TAD CE1TX in our listening room. Anything below 200 Hz should be taken with a grain of salt: there are reflections from the room there, too, know that.

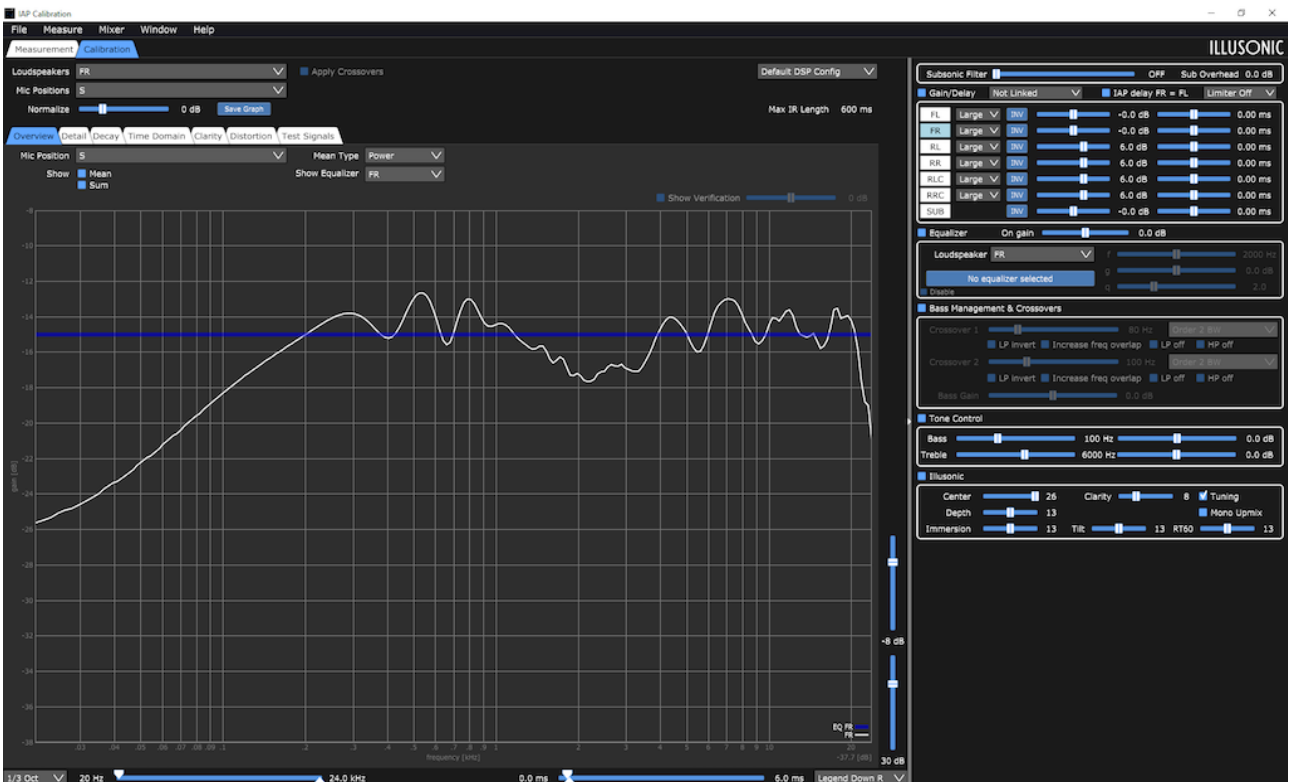
The measurements were done with a DPA 4091 microphone on an Audient ID14 pre-amp. This goes through an Illusonic IAP8 processor that also runs the measurement software.

Frequency and distortion (*simultain distorsion 1 m straight —>*)

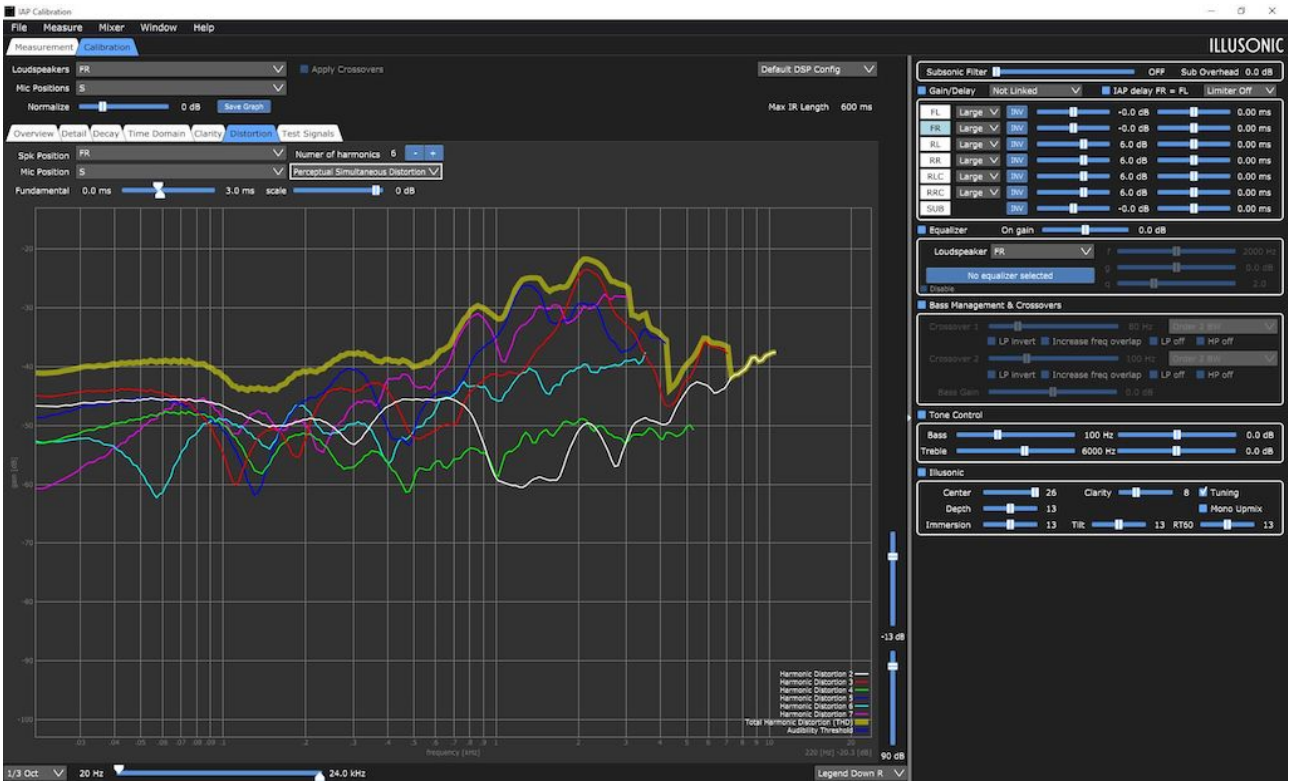




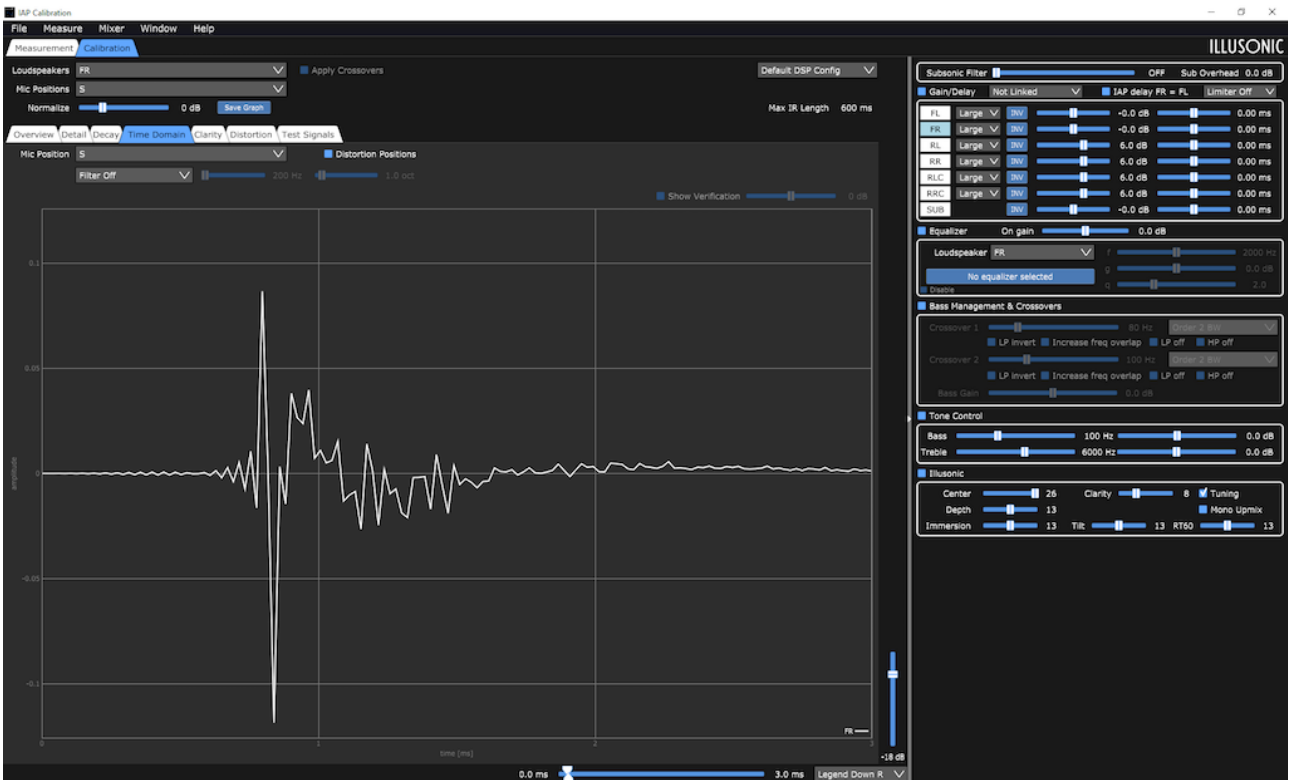
Response 30 ms 1 m straight



Response 1 m straight



Perceptual simultain distortion – 1m – straight

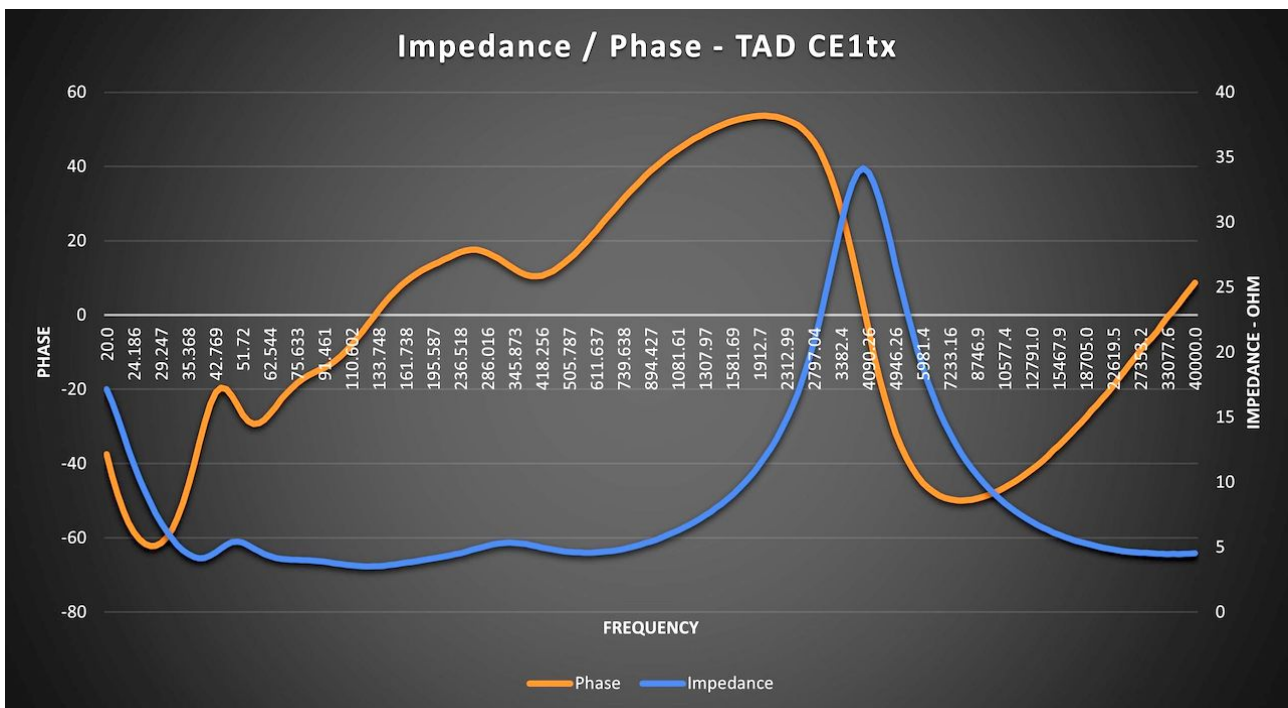


Impulse 1m straight

Anyone listening to the TAD CE1TX will not be surprised that it measures pretty neutrally. There is a very slight belly around the midrange. That's about 1.5 dB or so relative to the center axis. That's almost inaudible, we estimate. We moved the microphone to see if it moves with it, but it doesn't. That also shows how stable this speaker is. The response shows that the speaker is tuned for some longer listening. It is nowhere aggressive.

Distortion is very low. The "Peak" you see is at -50dB, which corresponds mte 0.3%. The rest is around -60dB, or 0.1%. This is really very good and shows that TAD is not talking nonsense in their story around pushing down distortion.

Impedance



It is abundantly clear that TAD wanted to make a friendly speaker with the CE1TX. The impedance is incredibly flat in the bass, which makes it easy to drive. Toward the treble there is a spike, but that's not a problem. Except perhaps with tubes: they will add some coloration, but not clip, because the impedance goes up, not down. The impedance doesn't dip below 4 ohms. Perfect.

Conclusion

What an incredibly beautiful monitor speaker this is. Both optically and playback-wise. The reproduction comes across as particularly uncolored, fast and insightful. And it doesn't seem to bother the TAD at all. And that's what characterizes High End Audio: everything flows into the room without you feeling like you have to work for it. Delicious. Alpha Approved!



ALPHA-AUDIO
APPROVED