

TAD Evolution 2 floorstanding speaker

A competition killer



Pros

- Plays very easily
- Layered
- Complete
- Balanced

Cons

- No 'sexy' look

Price: € 14250 per pair

Build quality



Controllability



Sound



Price



There are reviews that change your perception of your hobby and everything around it. They are products that pry your 'ow so safe' anchor points loose and leave you floating for a moment. Lost. It's frustrating at times, but it also forces you to keep going. To pick yourself up and improve. Away with the safe boxes and fixed values.... on to new standards! We have the TAD Evolution 2 in front of us.

Those who follow us know that we are working on a radical update of our reference system. We started with the beautiful **Sonnet Pasithea** NOS dac. That one made us realize that an update was really needed. Then came the Pass Labs X150.8 (review to follow) which opened a whole new window on hifi. But also showed that some of the balance in our system needed to be found again. That led to the welcoming of the **Grimm UC1**. (Yes... the bottom of our bank account had long been reached, believe us). Anyway... is the **Focal Sopra No1** still the right partner in this system? Hmmm...

TAD Evolution 2

We could first start writing a whole story about the technology of this Japanese creation. Think of the brand new designed, 1-inch Beryllium tweeter (apparently our ears are very sensitive to Beryllium) with a precisely calculated, newly designed waveguide. Or the also completely redesigned, Aramid Composit woofers – with a kind of paper pulp cone glued to the back for damping – which are in 2.5-way configuration with the tweeter (crossover at 90 and 2800 Hz). Is it important to mention that the woofers have a new, particularly strong magnet? And that these can have a particularly long stroke that is also very linear? Ow... who is curious about the bass reflex port: it is at the bottom and looks like a horn that is split in two, so that energy goes forward and backward. Partly because of this, the TAD Evolution 2 really reaches 30 Hz and it stops at the top of the spectrum at 60 kHz. Almost full range so. And that in a relatively compact cabinet.

Anyway: we now still summarized a bit of technology. But if we are honest, during our listening period, we have not given the technology of this loudspeaker any thought. Only at the time of writing we started to look things up. The **TAD Evolution 2** (supplied by **Audiofeel**, Netherlands) is one of the *least* technical sounding speakers we have tested in 15 years. This pair just makes *music*.

Time and again we are drawn into the music and sometimes we notice that tears are forming... that's how pure and real it sounds. Nothing distracts... everything comes at us as a whole. Flowing, pure and unforced. It's just... wow...

Unpretentious



The weird thing about this speaker is that it looks totally unassuming. Where quite a few manufacturers apply all sorts of bells and whistles to make a speaker *look* 'impressive', the TAD Evolution 2 is, simply put, a wooden cabinet with three units in it. The beauty can be found in other things (spoiler: especially the reproduction of music).

The TAD Evolution 2 is, of course, very nicely finished. No seams, beautiful real veneer and who looks more closely, sees that the units are indeed very special. They are developed by TAD itself and made by TAD. They didn't purchase from a large manufacturer to then make a speaker. Not that there is anything wrong with that, but we think a producer deserves extra points when they make their own units. We realize that this is incredibly complex – and therefore expensive. TAD does go the extra mile. And when this is done with Japanese precision and discipline, the result is really incredibly impressive. As it turns out.

The base is a very heavy metal plate with spikes at three points. Spikes and cups are included. The speaker is – at some height to give the port space – fixed to this foot. Those who want to improve stability a bit, or apply a tilt, can screw additional supports into the foot. We played on three spikes without any problems.

The set-up

We have heard the TAD on several amplifiers and dacs. Most of the time we played on the Pass Labs X150.8, because this really is a match made in heaven. Both dacs – the Grimm UC1 and the Sonnet Pasithea sound very good on this speaker. This is because the TAD manages to expose the accents beautifully, without showing any sharpness.

- Pass Labs XP-12
- Pass Labs X150.8
- NAD M23
- Grimm UC1
- Sonnet Pasithea
- Grimm TPM wiring
- Driade Flow cabling (speaker / interlinks)
- Isotek filters(Titan / Aquarius)
- YETI Power cables



The Sound

Of course, we've already given away quite a bit about the sound. That's just what makes this speaker tick. Somehow your author even catches himself talking to himself over and over again during a listening session. "Wow... what a speaker... incredible" and things like that. Kind of crazy and let's hope the fellow tenants don't think it's a permanent ailment.... But yes: everything just fell into place with this TAD Evolution 2. Is that a random, magical match?

Hmmm... we estimate that it's a combination of factors:

- TAD just makes very good speakers
- Pass Labs just makes very good amplifiers
- These two also show the best of each other...

But the basis – in our opinion – is that the electronics are correct. The measurements of the TAD also betray that this speaker is not only tuned very neutrally, but also that the distortion is very low. Both at 1 meter and at 3 meters (listening position) and on- and off-axis. But you can see these screen shots in the next chapter.



Big, generous and smooooth

Now, the Focal Sopra No1 already puts down a very decent stereo image. In fact: the Sopra can project beautifully with real depth and width and height. That is also one of its strengths. And the power of a good monitor speaker in general. This TAD, however, makes the entire room disappear and fills it with music. Partly due to the round and beautifully detailed and layered bass. It all flows wonderfully into the room. And it does so with the greatest of ease.

**IN SHORT: THE TAD EVOLUTION
2 IS A GENEROUS JAPANESE.
A WONDERFUL
FLOORSTANDER THAT OFFERS
THE MUSICIAN A COMPLETE
STAGE TO PERFORM AT THEIR
ABSOLUTE BEST.**

What your author really enjoys is that this speaker does not throw gravy all over the music. The bass is indeed round and generous, but not colored or woolly. In fact, it lets your hear exactly what is happening. It can put layer upon layer upon layer without getting tiresome or messy. That's a strength that can really only be heard in very well-tuned, active, closed systems.

Speaking of layering, we have rarely heard a speaker play so easily and with so much insight. Sure, we could cite a Raidho D5 or a Wilson Alexx V. But those are systems of 100's of 1000's of Euros. (literally). And while 14,250 Euros per pair is a lot of money, the level at which this Evolution 2 plays is secretly higher although that's always hard to quantify we think. Because yes...well... how do you scale a level? Because level depends on an unprecedented number of factors, including acoustics, control, source.... It's an interplay.

Killer

However, if you have a good collection of electronics, you will notice very quickly that this TAD Evolution 2 is a fairly easy speaker to drive. And that it is a speaker with a remarkably good balance. And a speaker with no glaring weaknesses. Something that still happens even in this class. It is... how can we put this kindly... a competition killer. We estimate that the 'big boys' will have a hard time with this newcomer. Although they do have much more marketing power and points of sale. As the Dutch say (literal translation): "Unknown makes unloved...". The correct translation would be: "what we don't know, we fear". And that is unfortunate.

Attraction

Your author writes out the articles in 'the typing office', as we have christened the space. Just a study with three workstations. The workroom usually has a smaller system running or the streaming system with the in-ceiling speakers. Great for some music while writing. That way we don't get distracted while working. Now concentrating is not such a big problem for your author. And usually he can control himself when there is something nice in the listening room. A matter of "Duty calls" shall we say.

However with the TAD it is different.... "Can't I just work on the laptop?"... "Ah.... one more track..."... "Until the break should be possible...". And so the excuses come.... It's a funny effect what this speaker has. And it doesn't just apply to your author. Most visitors stick around. "Can you play this track? ... And then maybe this to hear some voices..." And so hours go by. Wonderful. A nicely balanced system has that effect on enthusiasts, as you can see.

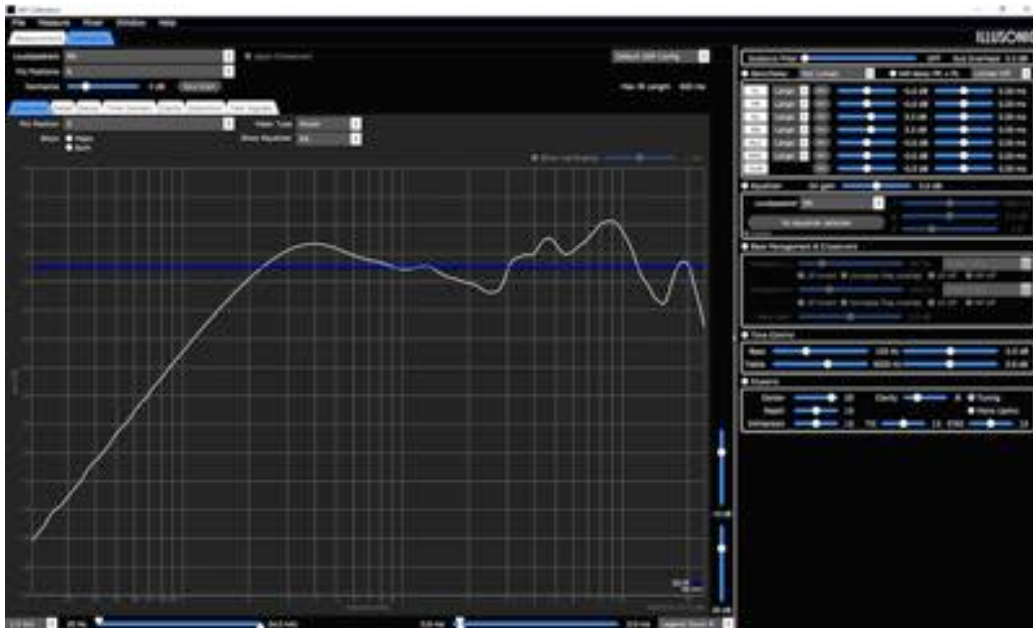
Sample video TAD Evolution2

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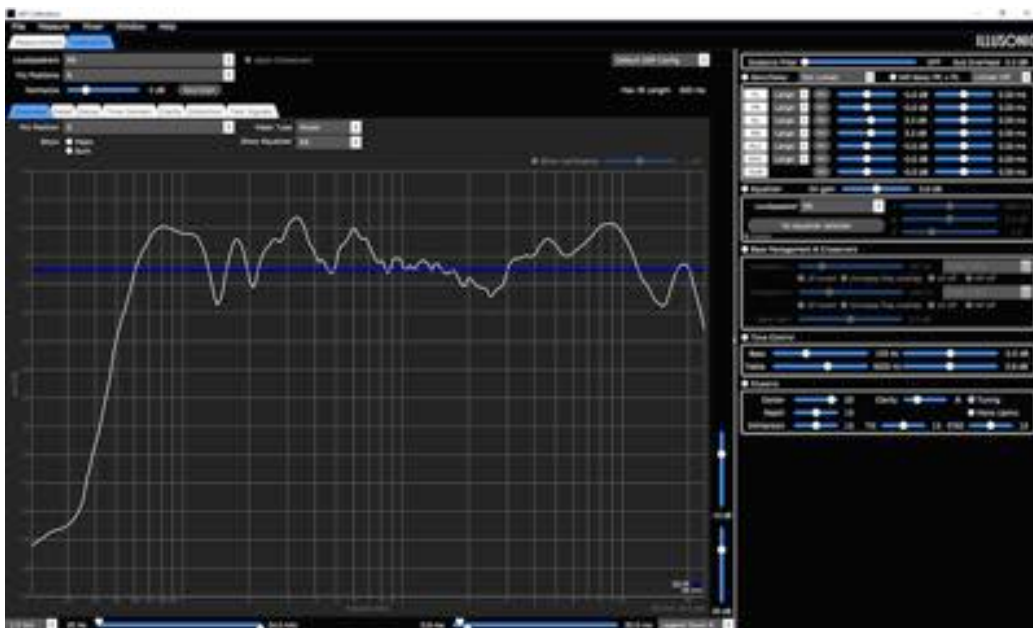
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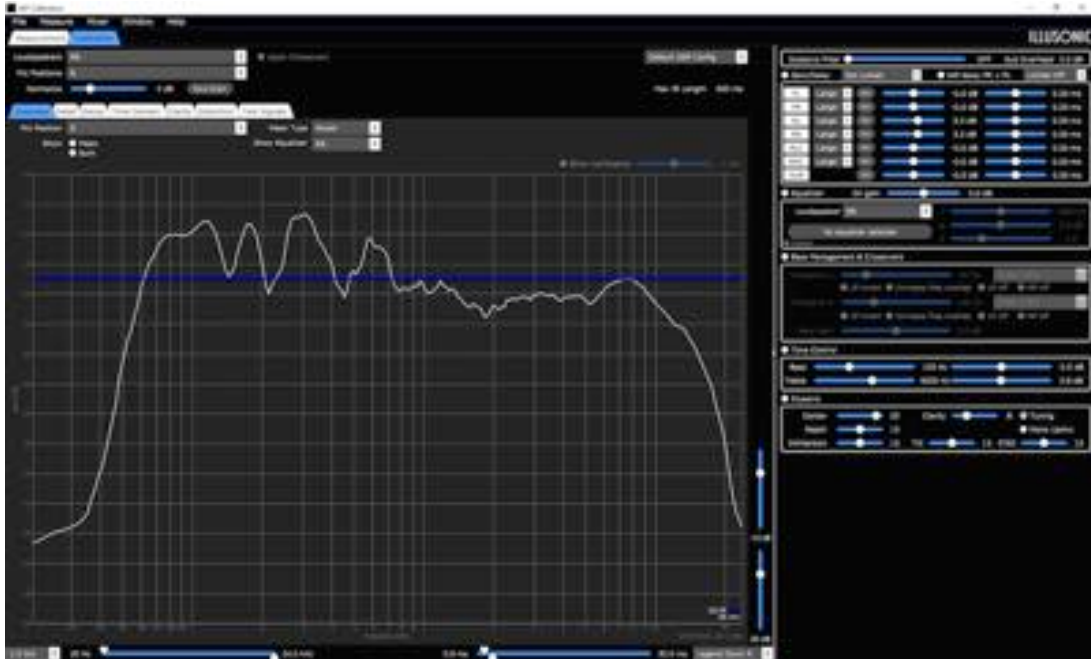
Measurements and conclusion



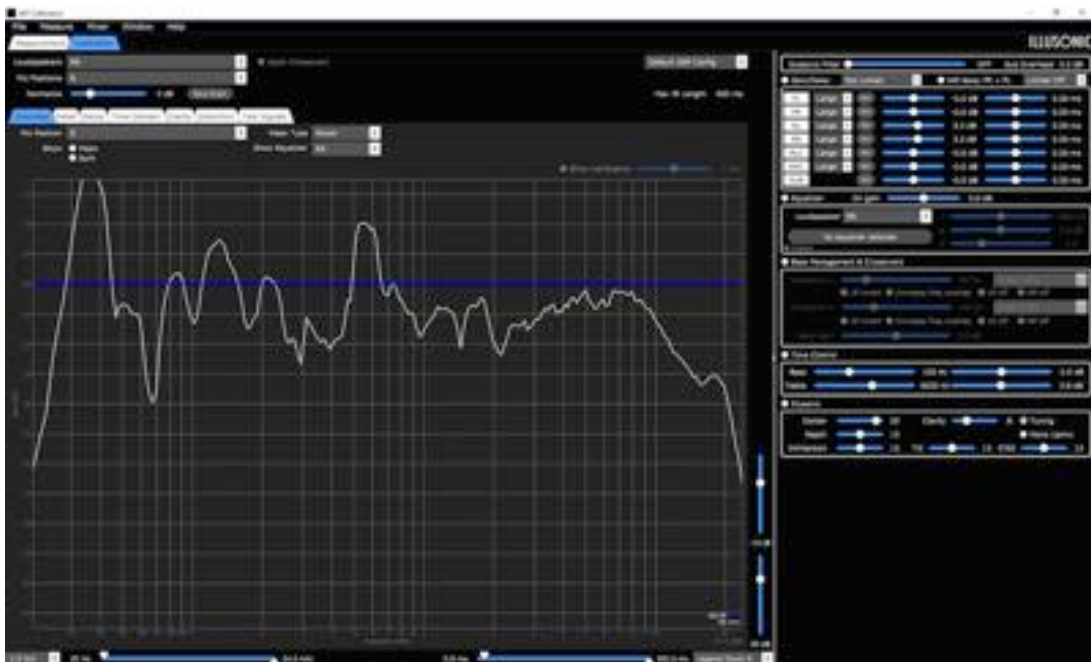
Response 1m 3 ms



Response 1m 30 ms

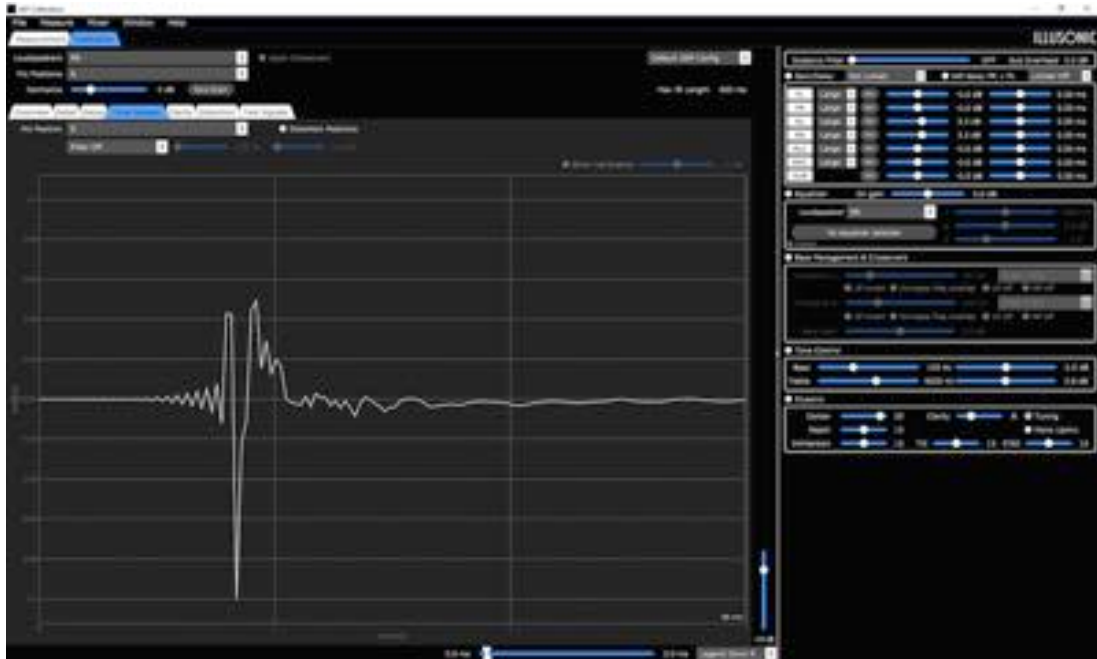


Response 1m off axis 30 ms

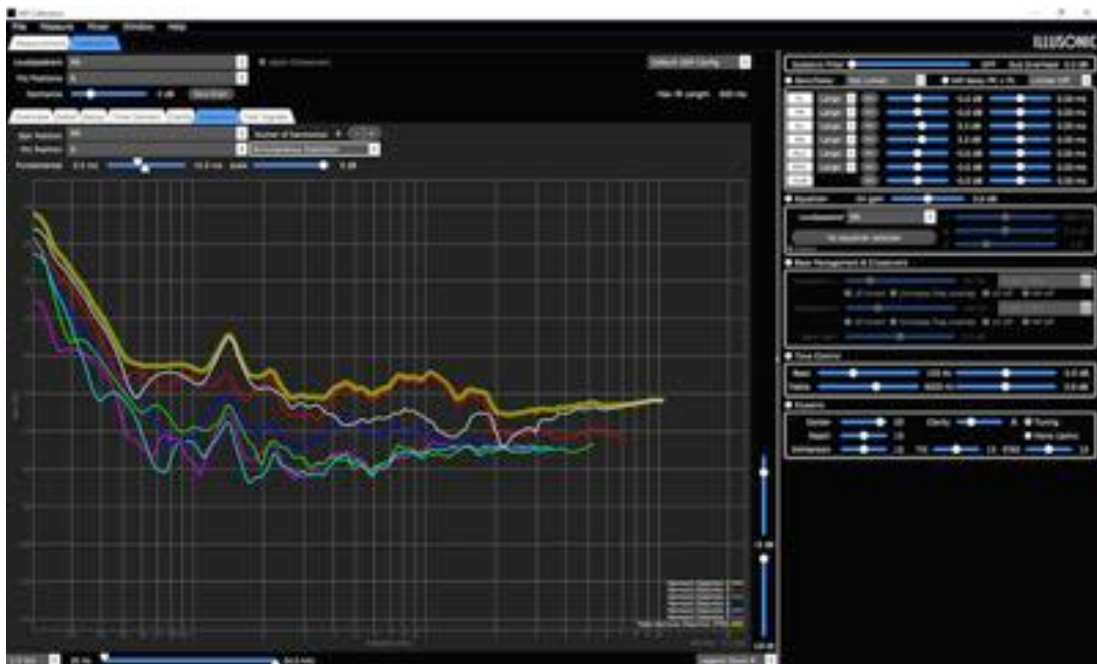


Response 3m couch off axis

Not entirely surprisingly, the TAD measures incredibly well. The response is particularly straight and measures in-room simply superb. Realize that we have no anechoic room. We measure the speaker as much as possible free standing and apply a window to filter things out. The measurement at 3 meters at the listening position is unfiltered. And even there the response is particularly good. The low peak can be damped with placement and change of seating position: it is room effect.

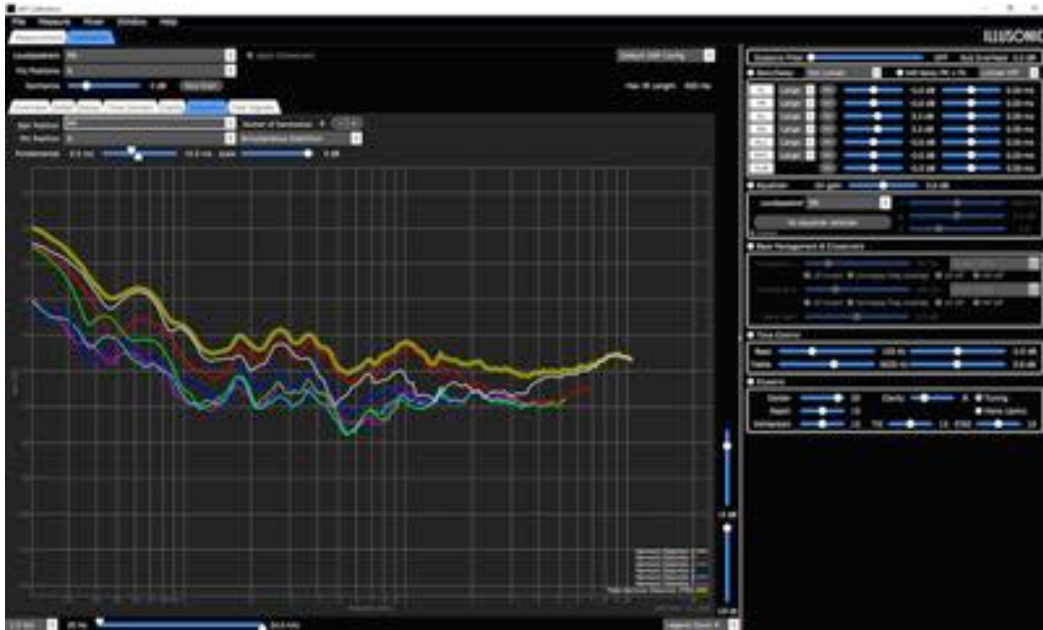


Impulse 3ms 1m right

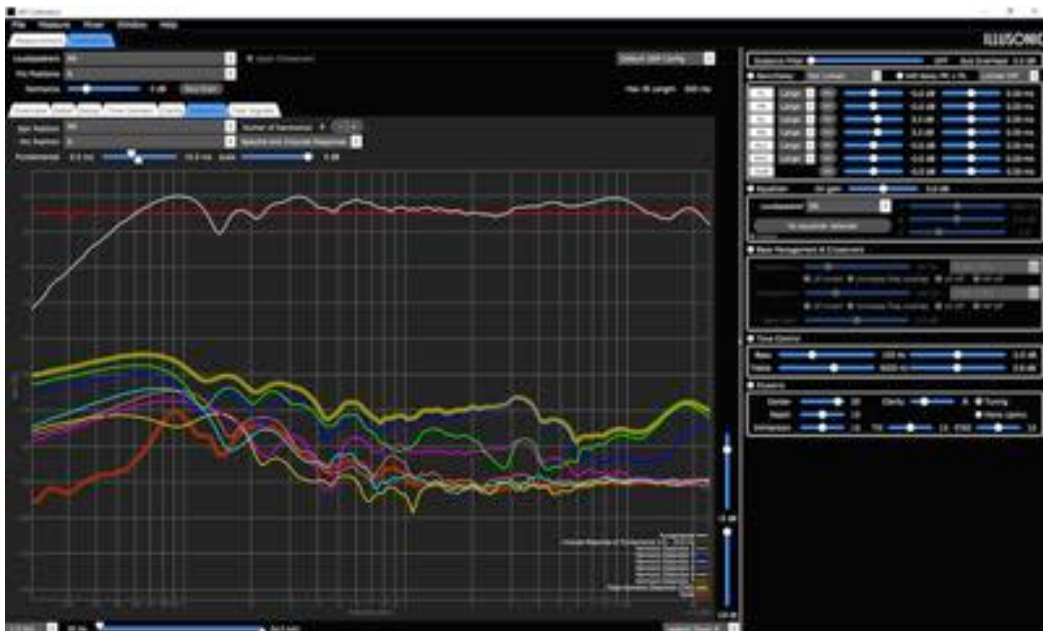


Distortion – simultaneous – 15ms – 1 meter of axis

Distortion is low and nicely even. Below 200 Hz is not reliable enough, so forget that. We see a small – noticeable – peak at 150 Hz; probably the reflex port. We can say that the TAD Evolution 2 stays below -55 dB: 0.18%. That's just top notch.



Distortion – simultaneous – 15ms – 3 meter – of axis



Vervorming – raw – 1 meter – right

Conclusion

What an incredibly beautiful speaker TAD has with the Evolution 2. This is potentially a competition killer. Seriously. This plays so incredibly easy, layered, insightful and big without being contrived or unsettled; unique. If we had the Alpha Ultimate Award, it would have been handed out. Don't deprive yourself of it if you're looking for a speaker in this class.