



PMC

DB1S-A11

PMC has given its highly-regarded DBS-A monitor a makeover. **Huw Price** assesses the results.

DB1S-A11

Manufacturer **PMC**

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PMC is a company that's known for its large transmission-line monitors. They are commonly found in high-end control rooms and mastering studios, but smaller designs like the DBS-A have seen PMC making inroads with the project studio scene.

As its name suggests, the DB1S-A11 is the latest version of the highly regarded DBS-A, and the most significant change is a power increase. The original 100-watt Flying Mole power amps have been replaced with 200-watt Class-D amps that were developed by PMC to provide extra headroom and minimise distortion.

The amps are integral to the DB1S-A11, but there's also a passive version and the amp modules are available separately. They link to the speakers via Speakon connectors, and the amps can be rackmounted. If you're running a surround system this arrangement provides easy access to

Key Features

- Usable frequency response: 50Hz–25kHz
- Effective line length: 1.5m
- LF drive unit: Doped 140mm cast alloy chassis
- HF drive unit: 27mm fabric soft dome
- Crossover frequency: 2kHz
- Dimensions: 155x290x283mm
- Weight: 5.13kg
- Amplifier input connection: balanced XLR
- Max power output: 200W

power switches and sensitivity controls. The switch and sensitivity control on the active DB1S-A11 are top-mounted, so they're still easy to get at.

Learning lines

Transmission-line speakers contain a tube that starts at the rear of the bass driver then loops up and down inside the enclosure before venting via the base of the cabinet – sometimes at the front, but in this case at the back. The main advantage of transmission-line speaker cabinets is (supposedly) bass extension that goes way beyond the capabilities of similar-size ported or infinite-baffle cabinets.

Much of PMC's development efforts are directed towards the type and quantity of foam used in the transmission line itself. Absorbing all

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but the lowest frequencies inside the transmission line is essential to eliminate distortion and audible phase issues. A couple of seconds of listening was all that was required to determine that the DB1S-A11s live up to this low-end promise. Deep, chesty bass without even a hint of boominess prompted us to turn on the test tones to determine exactly what was going on.

Roll-off starts at around 100Hz, but it's extremely smooth and gradual. The fundamental frequency was still clearly audible at 20Hz and we couldn't detect any distorted overtones. Given that the size of the cabinet barely exceeds that of a Yamaha NS10, this is nothing short of remarkable. Bass response is fast and defined, too, so even dubby bass lines retain their rhythmic drive.

Best of all, there was absolutely no port chuffing – the flatulent blast that emanates from many ported cabinets in response to low-frequency energy. Of course, you could get a subwoofer to handle the low stuff, but bass handling is far from being the DB1S-A11's only attribute. These speakers have an effortlessly clear, transparent quality across the entire frequency range.

Detail assessment

The absence of an upper bass hump contributes to an outstandingly revealing and detailed midrange with no discernible colouration. While it's easy to

Measuring Up

PMC is pretty much out there on its own as a large-scale manufacturer of compact transmission-line monitors. More conventional competitors around this price point include the Genelec 8050APM (£2,374 pair) the Dynaudio's BM15A (£2,366 pair) the Event Opal (£2,360) and the Quedest S8 (£2,900 pair). If you fancy building your own passive transmission-line speaker, IPL Acoustics offers several kits (£344–£727 pair) but none is as compact as the DB1S-A11.



pick out the nuances of individual mix elements, everything gels superbly. Imaging is razor-sharp – both left/right and the depth of the soundstage.

The only downside is that PMC doesn't regard acoustic issues as its responsibility, so EQ-adjustment controls aren't provided. That's OK if you

work in an adequately treated room, but it may be an issue if you're recording in less than perfect conditions.

We spent over a week with the DB1S-A11s assessing recordings and even tidying up mixes we had previously been happy with. Then, at the end of each day, we found ourselves listening to CDs for sheer enjoyment value. We can therefore report that these monitors are totally non-fatiguing and very easy to work with. Best of all, they provide the type of wide-open sonic window and eerie realism that's the preserve of only the very finest monitors. We may have found our new favourite nearfields... **MTM**

MTM Verdict

WHY BUY

- + Solid, controlled bass
- + Razor-sharp imaging
- + Deep soundstage
- + Astonishing detail
- + Big sound/compact size

WALK ON BY

- No digital input
- No EQ control
- Non-indented sensitivity controls

Ample power, stunning clarity and incredible bass extension make the DBS-A11s just about perfect for small-studio monitoring.

