

Affordable\$\$Audio

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Elemental Designs A6-6T6 Monitors

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Specifications:

Max Power- 200w

Min Power- 15w

Nominal Impedance- 6 Ohm

Sensitivity: 89.6db

Tweeter: 1.3 inch Silk Dome

Midrange Drivers: (2) 6 inch Poly

Cabinet type: Dual vented

Frequency Response: 50-22Khz +/- 3db

Measurements: 22.4 in H x 8.65 in W x 9 in D

Weight: 42lbs pair

Price: \$365 pair

www.elementaldesigns.com



Growing up in a small community my parents did all their business with friends to be honest. The local Sears catalogue store maybe had a hundred things on display; everything else took a week or so to come in from the regional distribution center. Our TV's and even the family console stereo came from the appliance store on Main Street. To this day I passionately avoid big box stores at all costs. I may pay a bit more, but I never have to make a second trip from receiving the wrong item. I mention all this for a reason; I have purposefully avoided buying equipment from any place other than mom and pop shops. I've always been able to check out pieces over the weekend; or, if I purchased a unit and didn't like it, I have been able to exchange for something more pleasing. That may not seem fair to the retailers, but I never buy new, instead I've focused on demo pieces just to save a dollar or two.

I first became interested in music and stereo equipment as a result of my personal struggle with stuttering. I learned how to sing and that gave me relief from my halting communication. But, I just didn't have the voice to pursue it beyond junior high. I did manage to play trumpet all thru high school, that, I believe, is the foundation for my love of music. I work from home; this allows me to listen to music a good five to seven hours a day. When I mentioned this to our publisher, Mark became quite jealous, but also recognized that as a writer I could give a quicker turn-around on some reviews.

Originally, I was going to do my first review on a classic Nakamichi cassette deck, but Mark had just received a pair of MTM-style speakers from a small company in Newton, Iowa, Elemental Designs. If Newton sounds familiar it was the home of Maytag, until being bought out and abandoned a few years back. Having spent a few summers in Iowa City, I was intrigued to say the least. After all, the Hawkeye state isn't exactly known as a hotbed of audio design. Which may actually be a good thing, why be distracted by what a nearby competitor is doing. Secondly, Midwesterners are notoriously loyal towards local brands, local people, and local jobs.

Elemental Designs has been around since 2002, catering to the local crowd, and slowly expanding upon their success. They offer both home and auto amplifiers using class d digital designs. A good portion of the manufacturing

does take place in Newton, though the cabinets in the case of the A6-6T6 were constructed in the Philippines.

Speaker Design

The A6-6T6 is a driver – tweeter – driver design, affectionately known as MTM. The cabinet is constructed of 3/4in MDF and painted black with a satin sheen. This makes it a children friendly finish that hides the fingerprints. This recognition that A6-6T6 are going to be a part of a family environment is a bit of common sense marketing. After all, why make a very affordable product and give it a finish that begs “don’t come close”. The drivers are recessed into the raised front baffle. The grills are a sturdy, plastic with the standard black grill material. Inside the cabinet white padded matting is used to dampen vibration throughout.

The drivers consist of a poly bend cone; the magnet is not as massive as one might believe and of a traditional look. The tweeter is a 1.3-inch silk dome that the manufacturer selected for its laid back upper register performance. The crossover is a design fitting of designs by Cerwin Vega, etc of the 1990’s. That is not a bad thing, just a nod to price/performance, no need to reinvent the wheel, just makes the parts and drivers match up properly and a smooth sound will be the result. A single, set of economical, 5 way binding posts are placed in a vertically angled receptacle in the middle of the back panel. Once again this is an a reflection in knowing in virtually all cases standard speaker wire will be used in gauges from 16-12.



Listening

The Elemental Design A6-6T6 like other tall monitors is an attempt to straddle the monitor/tower gap. It is big enough to satisfy most of those who want big speakers, yet be small enough to have flexibility in placement. For this review I decided that these speakers would be paired with receivers in most cases, therefore, I hooked it up to my Yamaha CR840 classic receiver and Marantz CC4001 multidisc player, and a pair of metal stands from Best Buy. In keeping with the potential customers, I brought out two 10ft lengths of 12 gauge Home Depot speaker wire.

I grew up listening to Rush because it was the first tape I ever owned being a gift from my cousin when I turned 13. That tape, *2112*, wore out years ago, but in the 1980’s a cd replaced it. During the review of the A6-6T6, I played all sorts of Rush’s music; the lead guitar tones and synthesizer reverberated with a fine replication. The buzz, as I like to call parts of Rush’s signature was evident in all of their studio releases. Since I work from home, I spend several hours a day listening to music, that has allowed me to tryout different genres. Though I never grew up with classical music I have developed a fondness for symphonic movie scores. Many in the area consider John Williams the master, and for the main theme he seems to have a knack for taking the movie and translating it into music. *ET: The Extra-terrestrial* with its magical, spiraling strings is something special. The silk tweeter that Elemental Designs engineer chose does offer the smooth response that they promote in their literature.

The A6-6T6 are not boomers, Elemental Designs save the bottom end for one of their subwoofers and that’s fine. At this price point, too many manufacturers try to create a ridiculously false booming bass. All it really does is destroy the rest of the sound spectrum and irritate the listener. The speakers are rated down to 50hz, which is a fair number, though some may consider it a bit weak for the cabinet size.

Mid frequencies in the form of acoustic guitars are quite pleasant, though lacking in richness of monitors hitting the \$1,000 price point. They do offer an easy, forward presentation. The tone is relaxing with the familiarity of

a pair of Cerwin Vegas that I recall from my youth.

Vocals sounded somewhat nasally, something I believe emanates from the lack of extra bracing in the cabinet. Obviously, a trade off in order to meet a specific price point, both from the factory, and at the customer level. This becomes more noticeable at high volume. I did find that by setting a heavy dictionary on top of each

speaker the sonics did improve. Had I spent another month with the A6-6T6, I would have been tempted to add some mass to the bottom of the inside.

Final Thoughts

I want to get this thought out; the Elemental Designs A6-6T6 is designed for the average music fan on a slim budget, not the audio hound. These speakers were created to give buyers the next notch up from basic big box fair without the price jump. For \$365 for the pair, with free shipping the buyer gets a worthy start on a family friendly speaker system without spending a fortune. Addition Elemental Design pieces can be added to create a full 5.1 or even 7.1 home theater setup including amplifier. For business owners looking for music in the workplace that can actually fill a large space yet remain unobtrusive. Either way, the A6-6T6 might just be a fine answer that budget conscious, but sound-savvy buyer.

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