

# The One and only



With such a massive sound, **Neville Roberts** can't quite believe he's listening to these tiny bookshelf loudspeakers

**H**aving limited space in your listening room doesn't mean you have to listen on headphones. There are a number of bookshelf loudspeakers available and recently released in the UK from Audience is The One, the smallest in its line of ClairAudient loudspeaker systems. The One loudspeaker has a single Audience A3S 3in full-range driver and a 3.5in passive radiator on the rear.

Audience is an American electronics company whose objective is to build the finest high-performance audio components. Businessman and music lover John McDonald and designer and audiophile Richard Smith first formed the company in 1972 and were later joined by design engineer Roger Sheker to form Audience with the objective of being a leader in product design and craftsmanship.

The One loudspeaker is designed for use on the desktop or bookshelf and is ideal for high-quality computer, surround sound or ambient music setups. It employs high-quality components in its construction and the front grille is held in place magnetically, so there are no fixing screws visible when it's removed – a nice touch. The proprietary Audience

A3S driver manages 12mm of usable excursion, which is quite something for a bookshelf speaker! The A3S also features a titanium alloy cone and has only 2.5g total moving mass. The manufacturer states that a subwoofer is recommended when mounting the speakers on stands to make them suitable for surround sound systems. They are also available with optional desktop stands (costing £50) and the units reviewed here are tested with these and without a subwoofer.

The single A3S driver delivers all frequencies in the audible range. However, if the entire cone is used to reproduce the high frequencies, the end result will exhibit severe beaming at frequencies over 10kHz. Audience solved this high-frequency beaming problem with the use of a small dust cap at the centre of the driver, which is decoupled from the rest of the cone in a controlled manner and acts as if it is a small concave dome tweeter with wide and uniform dispersion.

As there is only a single drive unit, The One eliminates potential phase anomalies due to the use of crossover networks. Audience points out that our hearing is most sensitive in the frequency region around 2.5kHz, which is where most mid/high

## DETAILS

**PRODUCT**  
Audience ClairAudient The One

**ORIGIN**  
USA

**TYPE**  
Bookshelf loudspeaker

**WEIGHT**  
1.8kg

**DIMENSIONS**  
(WxHxD)  
140 x 178 x 178mm

**FEATURES**  
● 3in full-range driver and 3.5in passive radiator  
● 8ohm, but also available in 4ohm or 16ohm  
● Standard banana plug/binding post connectors

**DISTRIBUTOR**  
High End Cable

**TELEPHONE**  
01775 761880

**WEBSITE**  
highendcable.co.uk

crossovers function and thus affect what we hear. The One does not require a crossover network and Audience says that the frequency response extends to 22kHz.

## Sound quality

I connect them to my valve Class A amplifier, which produces a comfortable 20W per channel. Audience suggests between 5-25W per channel to power The One. I place the speakers on a table and close to the rear wall, as recommended, to enable the auxiliary passive radiator on the rear to do its job. I start off with *Lincoln Mayorga & Distinguished Colleagues – Volume III* on the turntable. I set my volume control at my usual listening position and sit down to listen. Boy, am I impressed! *You Are The Sunshine Of My Life* positively sparkles. Is that sound really coming from those diminutive speakers? I hear a full and expansive sound that doesn't gel with what my eyes are telling me!

Next up is an EMI recording of Beethoven's *Symphony No. 6* by the Munich Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Rudolf Kempe. Once again, I am surprised by the fullness and the detail of the performance. Of course, no loudspeaker is perfect and the bass drums don't have the power I am used to. Also, the very top end is a little recessed, evidenced by the triangle being further behind the other percussion instruments. These observations must be put into the context of a bookshelf loudspeaker being listened to in a large sitting room with no subwoofer to augment the bass, however.

## Conclusion

Whether desktop or stand mounted, these little speakers provide a big sound. If space is at a premium The One should definitely be high up on your audition list ●

The massive sound of The One bellies the tiny size



## Hi-Fi Choice

### OUR VERDICT

**SOUND QUALITY**  
★★★★★ **LIKE:** A full and expansive sound from a tiny loudspeaker

**VALUE FOR MONEY**  
★★★★★ **DISLIKE:** High frequencies a little recessed and lower bass lacks punch

**BUILD QUALITY**  
★★★★★ **WE SAY:** The One produces remarkable quality that belies its tiny size

**FEATURES**  
★★★★★

### OVERALL

