

Undoubtedly, a pair of outstanding full-range speakers is a coveted gem for many audiophiles with limited space. Although their price is more cost-effective compared to traditional multi-driver, multi-way speaker designs, their concept is remarkably simple yet forward-thinking. Full-range drivers are capable of reproducing the entire frequency spectrum, meaning that from high to mid to low frequencies, a single driver can handle it all. This eliminates issues related to frequency response integration and phase distortion that arise in multi-driver systems. In a sense, it truly “simplifies the complex” while achieving the ideal state of single-point sound reproduction. Thanks to the principle of using only one driver, full-range speakers can operate without a crossover, driven directly by an amplifier. Due to the aforementioned advantages, full-range drivers are extremely easy to drive, allowing even low-power amplifiers to achieve excellent sound quality effortlessly. This is why many audiophiles specifically choose single-ended triode amplifiers (such as 300B or the even lower-powered 2A3) to drive them, captivating enthusiasts with small listening spaces. Many audiophile friends around me have even purchased high-quality full-range drivers to build their own DIY speakers. Since full-range speakers are so outstanding, why aren’t major audiophile brands rushing to release them? In fact, full-range speakers have certain limitations, with the main contradictions still centered on the full-range driver itself. Due to physical and material constraints, most small-diameter full-range drivers struggle to deliver the low frequencies and dynamics that we typically associate with full-range performance, especially in home living rooms or larger settings, where even sound pressure levels may be insufficient. Larger-diameter full-range drivers may improve low-frequency response and dynamics, but they often fall short in high-frequency performance and speed. Therefore, the ideal use case for high-quality full-range speakers is typically in environments with limited space. Recently, I had the opportunity to experience the fifth-generation ClairAudient 1+1 full-range monitor speakers from the American brand Audience at Premier Hifi. Even in a 15-20 square meter listening space, their accuracy, dynamics, and energy surpassed my expectations.

A Brand Embodied with American Audiophile Spirit

Audience is a brand we’ve introduced to readers extensively in the past, particularly its cables and power conditioners. It is a highly regarded American electronics company founded by John McDonald and Richard Smith. The company’s goal is to produce outstanding, high-standard, and high-performance audio accessory products. Currently, Audience offers a wide range of products, including speaker cables, power cords, audiophile capacitors, power conditioners, and loudspeakers. Unlike many American audio manufacturers that focus purely on “manufacturing for the sake of manufacturing,” Audience stands out with its unique approach to production and manufacturing. From product R&D and design to operations and craftsmanship, Audience is distinctive, making it a leader and trendsetter in the industry. Every employee at Audience strives to push product technology to its limits, infusing a strong human element into their products. While Audience’s products may not stand

out in terms of appearance, and their power conditioners are neither bulky nor flashy, they incorporate solid technology and high-quality materials. This has made their cables, capacitors, and power conditioners highly popular among audiophiles, as their contribution to sound improvement is remarkably evident. When paired with Audience's own cables, the results are undoubtedly even more impressive. In fact, when Audience was first established, the founders primarily focused on developing speakers and driver units. However, their cables and power conditioners gained significant market attention, leading to substantial business growth. Designing speakers has always been John McDonald's unwavering passion, and the ClairAudient 1+1 monitor speaker is a testament to the brand's dedication, evolving from the first generation to the current fifth generation. Continuously upgraded and refined, this model has become an ideal choice for users seeking exceptional full-range speakers.

Small Enclosure, Big Secrets

The "V5" in ClairAudient 1+1 V5 PRM stands for the fifth generation, while "PRM" refers to Personal Reference Monitors, indicating compact, reference-grade monitor speakers. Their small size and dimensions make them one of the most unique and powerful small full-range speakers in the world, as defined by the manufacturer. The ClairAudient 1+1 V5 PRM employs two proprietary A3S2-16 full-range drivers, one positioned at the front and one at the back. This driver represents Audience's latest breakthrough in full-range technology, incorporating the patented XBL drive system and a pending-patent suspension and basket design. The A3S2-16 full-range driver boasts a wide frequency range, from 40Hz to 22kHz, with exceptional power handling and dynamic range, achieving a sensitivity of 87dB. It requires no additional tweeter or crossover, resulting in an exceptionally smooth frequency transition from high to mid frequencies and highly consistent sound reproduction. However, it includes a built-in 40Hz high-pass filter and a new sound compensation circuit to reduce subsonic frequencies and achieve a smoother frequency response. Structurally, the A3S2-16 resembles a high-power subwoofer driver, featuring a large neodymium magnet system, a large voice coil, and a vented suspension. As a result, the A3S2-16 responds remarkably quickly. With a combined cone and voice coil mass of just 2.5g, it is exceptionally easy to drive, delivering outstanding resolution and dynamic range. Requiring only 40-80W, it produces excellent full-range performance and beautiful sound reproduction. The driver's overall characteristics include excellent heat dissipation, fast response speed, outstanding resolution, natural and realistic sound, and powerful dynamics. The A3S2-16 offers an 11mm excursion range (5.5mm forward and backward), producing highly uniform force within this range, significantly reducing distortion and compression, with less than 1dB of compression at sound pressure levels up to 95dB. The voice coil and associated wiring are made from OHNO single-crystal copper, a detail that reflects Audience's uncompromising pursuit of quality, resulting in unparalleled sound clarity and resolution. The driver's diaphragm features a curved design and is made from anodized

aluminum-magnesium alloy, making it extremely robust. The concave dust cap is crafted from a proprietary material that provides constrained-layer damping to control diaphragm breakup at high frequencies, maximizing high-frequency dispersion. The suspension is made from a special material designed to allow significant linear excursion. The venting system supports high-volume airflow while preventing turbulence, enabling voice coil cooling and higher power handling. The pending-patent basket structure significantly eliminates typical design resonances and prevents trapped air energy. The mechanical design has been refined using state-of-the-art analysis software to minimize mechanical resonances. The ClairAudient 1+1 V5 PRM also features an A3S2-16 full-range driver on the back, designed in phase with the front driver, which greatly enhances soundstage expansion, low-frequency response, and power handling while canceling out vibrations. To enhance low-frequency output and energy within the limited enclosure volume, passive radiators are incorporated on both sides of the speaker, delivering sound pressure levels and dynamic range that exceed expectations.

Role and Positioning

In terms of market positioning, the ClairAudient 1+1 V5 PRM is ideal for users with limited listening spaces who seek reference-grade sound reproduction. Even at very low volumes, it effortlessly delivers dynamic impact and musical expressiveness. Beyond serving as stereo speakers, the ClairAudient 1+1 V5 PRM can also be integrated into a home theater system, functioning, for example, as surround speakers. Additionally, the ClairAudient 1+1 V5 PRM pairs exceptionally well with any high-quality amplifier, delivering outstanding performance. Whether it's a tube amplifier, Class A, Class AB, or Class D amplifier, the ClairAudient 1+1 V5 PRM reproduces music in a clean, uncompressed manner. For optimal listening results, the manufacturer recommends placing the speakers in a monitor-style setup, with the drivers aimed directly at or slightly behind the listening "sweet spot" (emperor's seat). For listeners positioned to the left or right of the sweet spot to also enjoy the sound, a greater toe-in angle can be used, positioning the speakers' sound projection intersection point in front of the sweet spot. To accommodate larger spaces or listeners who prefer more low-frequency presence, the ClairAudient 1+1 V5 PRM can be paired with a subwoofer to enhance and extend the low-frequency range. However, for most small listening environments, the low-frequency performance of the ClairAudient 1+1 V5 PRM is sufficient. As the speakers may initially sound "tight," the manufacturer suggests a break-in period of 20-50 hours to soften this characteristic, with continued use up to 100 hours being ideal.

Accurate, Clear, Neutral, and Energetic

At Premier Hifi, the ClairAudient 1+1 V5 PRM was paired with a Japanese CS Port GM70PA tube amplifier, using GM70 high-voltage direct-heated triode tubes, similar in design to 211 and 845 tubes, with an output of 20W/8Ω per channel—

more than sufficient to drive the ClairAudient 1+1 V5 PRM. The listening space was approximately 15-20 square meters, and I initially positioned the speakers in a monitor-style setup (aimed at the sweet spot). I noticed that the front and rear panels of the speaker are designed with a “pyramid” tilt, eliminating parallel surfaces to prevent standing waves from accumulating within the enclosure, resulting in cleaner sound reproduction. Even in near-field listening, the tilted front panel creates a directional angle for the drivers, so the speakers do not need to be at ear level. The enclosure also incorporates proprietary damping materials to further reduce standing waves and internal reflections. Playing (《谿1》 by Danny Summer), the ClairAudient 1+1 V5 PRM showcased its strengths in sound accuracy and vocal imaging, delivering precise reproduction with minimal coloration, characteristic of true monitor-grade speakers. This recording allowed me to appreciate the speaker’s accurate sound focus and neutral tonal characteristics, confirming the manufacturer’s claim of it being a personal reference monitor. The use of an identical full-range driver on the rear expanded the soundstage, enhancing spatial presentation and preventing the sound from feeling thin. This was further validated when listening to the classic (Carmen-Fantasia) violin recording. To slightly boost low-frequency presence, I reduced the toe-in angle. When playing dynamic classical recordings like (《发烧骚》), micro-dynamics and energy were impressively unleashed. For instance, during orchestral passages with significant dynamic shifts from soft to loud, the speakers maintained clarity without distortion or harshness, even at higher sound pressure levels. At climactic moments, the full orchestral power was grandly conveyed. Such recordings are a challenge not only for the ClairAudient 1+1 V5 PRM but also for large floor-standing speakers. In this space, I experienced the overwhelming momentum of a symphony orchestra, with its dramatic ebbs and flows striking an emotional chord. In fact, while the ClairAudient 1+1 V5 PRM exhibits the qualities of a monitor speaker, I found that when driven by a tube amplifier, it avoids sounding dry or thin. Instead, it delivers a pleasing, listenable sound with excellent layering and musical flow. Despite its compact size, the soundstage and spatial presentation far exceeded my expectations, surpassing other full-range speakers with similar driver sizes. The ClairAudient 1+1 V5 PRM reference-grade personal monitor speaker, equipped with dual proprietary full-range drivers, offers effortless driveability, neutrality, accuracy, and ample energy, making it a favorite among full-range speaker enthusiasts. With versatile placement options and the potential to pair with a subwoofer, it’s an excellent choice for small spaces and single-ended triode amplifier users, bringing a fresh and exciting listening experience.