

# Acoustic Energy AE309<sup>2</sup> floorstanding loudspeaker

Ed Selley

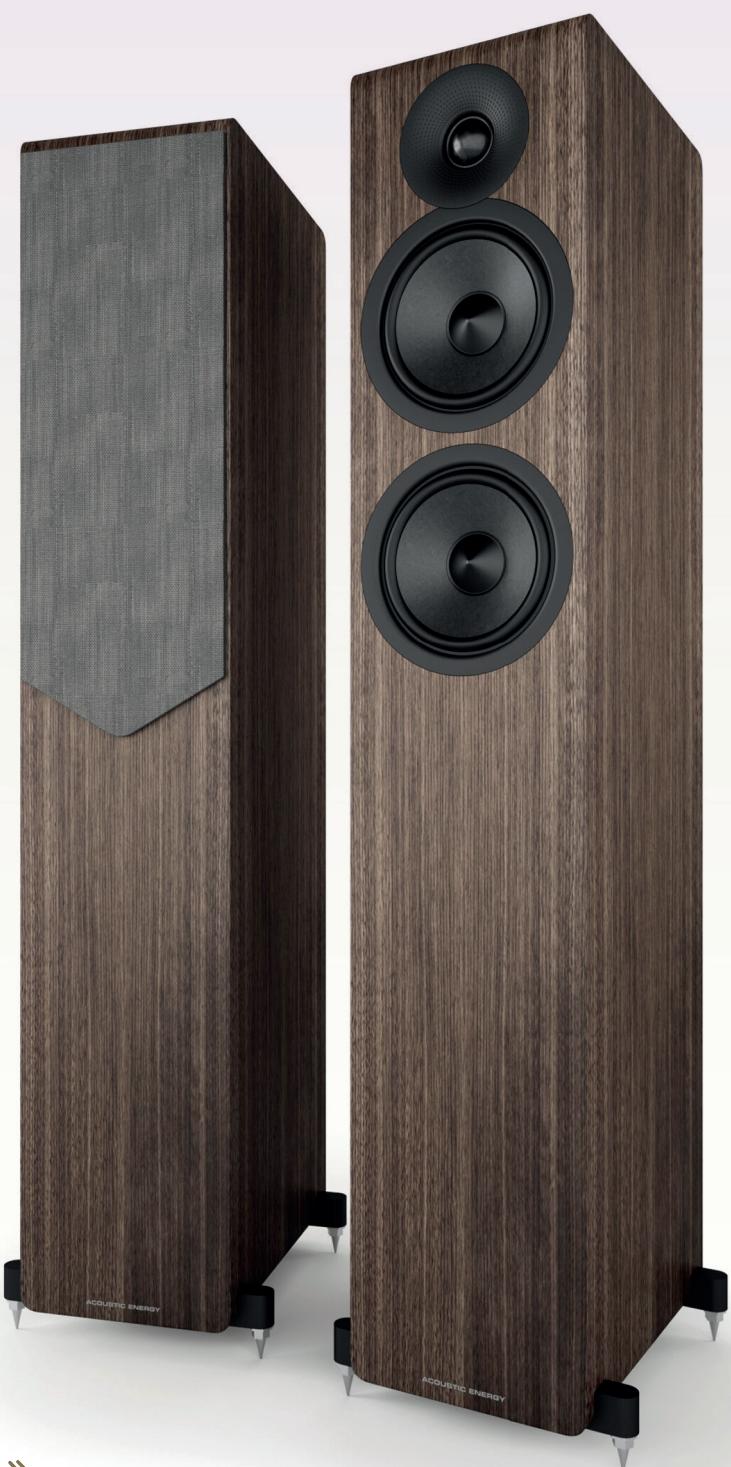
There was a time, not too long ago, when the affordable floorstander was a ubiquitous part of the broader speaker market. Any speaker company that produced an affordable range would have at least one in the lineup, and there would often be room for more than one model. In more recent years, however, the number of these speakers available has diminished considerably. Acoustic Energy has a notable pedigree in this area and is one of the companies that has maintained its commitment to the concept.

The 300<sup>2</sup> Series is the second tier of speakers produced by the company, with the 100<sup>2</sup> models being even more affordable. It also marks the first product range to incorporate design thinking and insights gained from the creation of the flagship Corinium. This is most evident in the range-topping AE320<sup>2</sup>, which features the same driver configuration as the Corinium; however, all 300 models have benefited from the expertise acquired during the development process. AE309<sup>2</sup> represents a significant reworking of the previous AE309, rather than a completely new design; this is logical, given that there really wasn't much wrong with it.

## Speed selector

The tweeter is a new soft-dome unit that Acoustic Energy has selected for its speed, clarity, and low distortion. It is a more conventional material than the unique device used in Corinium, but the principles of reducing mass without compromising stiffness remain intact. Behind the dome is a neodymium ring magnet, which allows for a large vent in the copper-shielded pole, enabling unwanted energy to radiate backwards rather than out the front of the dome.

The mid-bass drivers have undergone a significant rework. This latest generation of drivers is reinforced with coconut fibres, a material I cannot recall seeing used in audio applications before now. The 120mm



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» cones incorporate a substantial amount of these fibres and are designed to offer improved stiffness and reduced breakup modes. The motor structure features an extended copper pole shield to minimise midrange distortion, while a non-conducting voice coil former enhances extension and dynamic range. Upon examining the drivers, there are no obvious visual clues that this material is in use, which is likely a good thing.

These drivers are housed in a cabinet that operates on principles similar to those of other recent Acoustic Energy speakers. The company continues to be a keen advocate of enhancing cabinets with stiffening material, and the AE309<sup>2</sup> is no exception. Like the 500 Series, the cabinet utilises RSC (Resonance Suppression Composite) to minimise unwanted vibrations and losses within the enclosure. It feels impressively inert considering the price point. A slot port on the rear, which is rapidly becoming a hallmark of Acoustic Energy, vents the cabinet, and the crossover supports a single set of connections.

### Sober and attractive

Aesthetically, the AE309<sup>2</sup> is appealing in a subtly sober manner. The company has diligently preserved sufficient styling elements from its past to provide the new speakers with a distinct visual identity, resulting in a fundamentally modern and tidy appearance. Additional details, such as the pointed dust caps, evoke certain Acoustic Energy

themes. The curved front panel and right-angled edges are both distinctive and effective, contributing to proportions that are elegant and suitable for any room.

Colour options include a 'Walnut' finish, which I feel might be a touch too dark for some tastes, but it's well executed and supported by black and white, both in a sheen rather than a high gloss finish. I really like the grey, almost tweed effect grilles, which are a nice touch. The unboxing is painless, and I appreciate the details, such as the included spike shoes, which allow the spikes to do the job without damaging a wood or laminate floor.

The standout feature of the AE309<sup>2</sup> is the low-end extension it offers. The lower roll-off is specified at 33Hz, without a quoted +/- dB figure. However, even considering it can be achieved within a 3dB tolerance, it still provides a noticeable 10Hz of additional low-end punch over any comparably priced stand-mount. It is stated to have a six-ohm impedance with a sensitivity of 89dB/w, meaning it should pair well with the wide range of £600 to £1,000 amplifiers currently available on the market without exerting undue strain on them.

### Three days in Bristol

The samples that arrived for testing were the same units that had been on display for three days at the 2025 Bristol Show, where they were played at 'lively' volumes throughout. This led me to give them the benefit of the

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» doubt regarding whether they were run-in, so I connected them to a Rega Brio Mk7, which had recently passed through the review process, and began to listen.

What resulted was impressive from the outset. Under the guidance of Designer and Managing Director Mat Spandl, the company has walked a careful and well-judged line between bringing a level of accuracy and control to modern Acoustic Energy products without losing the slightly ballistic nature of the speaker that encourages you to nudge the volume up and nod along to the music. The utterly lovely *Hallucinating Love* by Maribou State [Ninja Tune] demonstrates this in fine style. The AE309<sup>2</sup> effortlessly captures the infectiously groovy nature of the material, but it does so with a grasp of tonal realism that, and I say this as a fan of old school Acoustic Energy, wasn't always the brand's forte.

### Focal point

This means that Holly Walker's brilliant vocal performance in 'Otherside' becomes the track's focal point, supported by the deliberately simple backing material. The efforts Acoustic Energy has invested in its tweeters have also reaped rewards. There is abundant treble energy, yet it is complemented by a degree of refinement and forgiveness that older models would have struggled to achieve. The stereo image is spacious without being hazy; it radiates from the cabinets themselves while never creating any noticeable gap in the centre. It's a seamless handling of scale that very few similarly priced stand-mounts can approach, and, equally importantly, it's something that adapts effortlessly to the material being played.

That promised bass extension is realised in fine style as well. The AE309<sup>2</sup> reaches areas that smaller speakers simply cannot, and the way it does so is impressively nuanced. The huge low note at the beginning of 'Song of the Stars' on Dead Can Dance's *Spiritchaser* [4AD] is delivered in a manner that is felt as much as heard; however, the control and definition of what the Acoustic Energy is doing ensure that it never feels like a blunt instrument.

The bass integrates into the lower midrange exceptionally well, leaving the speaker sounding usefully balanced. Even when you ask for something genuinely complex like Cheb Runner's *Jawgana* [Rebel Up], which has a time signature quite unlike... well, anything else I've ever heard, the Acoustic Energy can make sense of it and deliver the frenetic energy of the track in the manner needed for it to shine.

### More power!

Although the partnership with Brio is good, there are clear indicators that the AE309<sup>2</sup> would benefit from additional power if available. I had the opportunity to run with the Roksan Caspian 4G, which provides both enhanced power and improved current delivery. This unlocks a higher level of performance from the AE309<sup>2</sup>, suggesting that some of the more powerful amplifiers on the market, priced just over a grand, might be a better match, particularly in larger rooms. I would be hesitant to label the Acoustic Energy as hard to drive, but I can understand why the company uses a Rega Aethos for show demonstrations, as the extra weight aids the speaker in delivering its best.

You won't need to spend three grand to get a tune out of the AE309<sup>2</sup>, and this means that even allowing for the thinning number of affordable floorstanders available, this one should be considered for any shortlist. In the manner of any self-respecting Acoustic Energy device, it is Hi-Fi when you need it to be and simply good fun when you want to turn up the volume and be transported away from the here and now. It looks and feels extremely smart while doing so. This is indeed an excellent loudspeaker and one that continues Acoustic Energy's impressive run of form. +

### Technical specifications

**Type:** 2.5-way, bass reflex floorstanding loudspeaker  
**Drive Unit:** 120mm paper cones  
**Tweeter:** 29mm fabric dome  
**Frequency Range:** 33Hz – 29kHz  
**Sensitivity:** 89dB  
**Peak SPL:** 112dB  
**Power Handling:** 120W  
**Crossover Frequency:** 285Hz / 3.8kHz  
**Impedance:** 6 ohms  
**Grilles:** Slim, cloth magnetic fit  
**Spike Thread Size:** M8  
**Finishes:** Walnut, 'Silk-Touch' Matte Black or Matte White  
**Dimensions (mm):** 900 x 170 x 270 (HxWxD, 920mm inc. spikes)  
**Weight:** 18.5kg (each)  
**Price:** £1,199, €1,500. \$2,199

**Manufacturer** Acoustic Energy

✉ [www.acoustic-energy.co.uk](http://www.acoustic-energy.co.uk) ☎ +44(0)1285 654432