



**DETAILS**

**PRODUCT**  
Acoustic Energy  
AE109²

**ORIGIN**  
UK/China

**TYPE**  
2.5-way  
floorstanding  
loudspeaker

**WEIGHT**  
16kg

**DIMENSIONS**  
(WxHxD)  
165 x 860 x 250mm

**FEATURES**

- 25mm microfibre dome tweeter
- 2x 130mm treated paper mid/bass drivers
- Quoted sensitivity: 89dB/1W/1m (6ohm)

**DISTRIBUTOR**  
Acoustic Energy

**WEBSITE**  
acoustic-energy.co.uk

four-layer voice coil with flux rings that help to improve the transfer of energy from the coil to the diaphragm.

In the 109², two of these drivers are used in a 2.5-way configuration. They are assisted by a rear-mounted port that is of the slot-type that Acoustic Energy has come to favour in its more recent designs. This port is open to the whole enclosure and sits right at the top of the back panel, which means the tweeter is also open to the port rather than sequestered away in its own chamber – although it seems to have been designed with this in mind. It's a 25mm soft dome unit that makes use of a prominent and relatively deep waveguide to help with dispersion.

The larger mid/bass drivers require a bigger cabinet, but here Acoustic Energy has been quite resourceful in how it has achieved this extra volume. By switching to a high-density fibreboard for the cabinet, AE has been able to make an enclosure that is 15 percent larger than previously, but with 30 percent greater internal volume. Usefully, when prompted it was prepared to give a little information on what qualifies as a 'high-density' board,

**It has commendable control over its low end with traditionally awkward test tracks**

stating that the MDF it uses is around 720kg/m³ while the HDF is around 900kg/m³. In the absence of a recognised scale of board density (it seems that such a thing doesn't exist), this is useful to know.

Acoustic Energy claims a frequency response of 51Hz to 26kHz for the 109² quoted at +/-3dB, so reasonably stringent. The quoted 89dB/W sensitivity and 6ohm impedance should not be beyond all but the lowest-powered amps to cope with too. This is a benign speaker to use day to day with nothing likely to be problematic for most amplifiers.

It's an attractive design too. Acoustic Energy hasn't drastically changed the look of the original 100 Series for the new model, but this is largely down to the fact that there was very little wrong with it. I've argued in the past that the number of styling cues from AE designs of old is effectively down to the pointed dust caps on the mid/bass drivers, but the overall aesthetic of the 109² is very pleasing and the proportions are excellent – helped by extremely good levels of fit and finish. Black and walnut finishes are



available and a full-length grille affixed by magnetic tabs is supplied. The only note of caution I'd sound is that the supplied spikes attach directly to the base of the cabinet. This means front-to-back stability is higher than side to side, which might be something to be mindful of for those of you with small children or big pets.

**Sound quality**

Connected to a test system of Rega io (see p44) integrated amp and iFi ZEN DAC v2 (HFC 480), the 109² manages to demonstrate fairly quickly what the additional cabinet volume it possess over and above standmounts can achieve. Playing the glorious *Little Giant* by Roo Panes, the Acoustic Energy doesn't necessarily have more bass than its smaller rivals, but the 'fill' from the midrange down is simply more effortless and believable. The result is a significant step forward in the overall scale created.

This is complemented by some well-judged tonal realism. Across a fairly varied pattern of test material, the AE109² manages to be both convincing and possessed of a feeling of energy and vibrancy that lifts its output above a simple performance. With the stark *IN DREAM* by Editors, it imparts Tom Smith's vocals in *No Harm* with a humanity and emotion that turns the track from 'interesting test material' to 'unsettling reflection on the human condition'. This is also a commendably hard speaker to provoke. Even with the decidedly edgy *Without You, I'm Nothing* by Placebo, it is entirely and



The AE109² costs £50 more than DALI's *Spektor 6* (HFC 473) and it would likely run the DALI closer than the preceding 120² that feels a little sluggish in comparison. The larger drivers and greater space and soundstage that results combine with the control and refinement that the 109² possesses to present a genuine challenge to the DALI. Style is subjective, but I feel this is a better-looking speaker too. The DALI fights back with the 'fizz' of excitement that it is able to deliver – something the 109² fractionally lacks.

enjoyably listenable. This is a far cry from products of old from the company. Less of a good thing is that some of the urgency of past Acoustic Energy designs is less present. This is not a slow or languid speaker at any stage and, critically, it maintains extremely commendable control over its low end even during traditionally stiff tests like *Telephasic Workshop* by Boards Of Canada. There are points, however, where I want it to be fractionally less civilised and to really make good on some of the intensity

**This benign speaker shouldn't be problematic to drive for most amplifiers**

the older designs could. Having said that, for many the gains in civility will be more useful. It points to a speaker that is going to 'play nice' with most components you might reasonably expect to partner it with.

Something else that warrants mention is that it shows commendable ability to keep working with electronics as you move up through price points. Changing out the Rega io for the larger Brio (HFC 446) provides an improvement to the bass extension and further gains in the soundstage and imaging. Go completely off-piste and bolt the 109² to five and a half grand's worth of Cambridge Audio Edge A, and it responds well to the imperious effortlessness of the bigger

amplifier. There's a useful degree of transparency here, too. I would be hesitant to describe the Acoustic Energy as a monitor, but it does reflect the divergence between different pieces of equipment so, if you add it to electronics you are already happy with, it's unlikely to upset that balance.

**Conclusion**

In fact, the 109² is unlikely to upset anyone. Acoustic Energy has taken a speaker that already worked pretty well and, rather than radically altering the premise, has gone about tweaking the execution. The result is that it looks good, sounds good and is usefully unconcerned about what equipment you choose to partner with it. More than anything else, the 109² is also a fine demonstration of the worth of the affordable floorstander concept and the virtues that it offers ●

**Hi-Fi Choice**

**OUR VERDICT**

<b>SOUND QUALITY</b> ★★★★★	<b>LIKE:</b> Engaging, spacious and refined sound; pleasant looks; good build quality
<b>VALUE FOR MONEY</b> ★★★★★	<b>DISLIKE:</b> Slight lack of outright excitement
<b>BUILD QUALITY</b> ★★★★★	<b>WE SAY:</b> A talented little floorstander that should work well in a variety of situations
<b>EASE OF DRIVE</b> ★★★★★	
<b>OVERALL</b> ★★★★★	

# Energy squared

Acoustic Energy's smallest floorstander has received a full reworking and **Ed Selley** has been giving it a shake down

**S**mall, yet affordable floorstanders are a type of speaker that really should be more successful than they seem to be. A speaker that needs no additional furniture involved in its placement and has useful extra cabinet volume as a result is one that makes a great deal of sense. Acoustic Energy has been producing the 100 Series for a number of years and has recently given the range a revamp. The AE109² is the smaller of two

floorstanders (the larger AE120² – HFC 473 – was announced shortly after the rest of the range went on sale). The AE109² is still a fairly compact speaker, but it is larger than the preceding model. One of the key reasons for this is the drivers it makes use of have increased in size. Where the original 100 Series used a 102mm driver, the new models have increased the size to 130mm. The driver is still made from treated paper but, as well as its increase in size, it now boasts a