

REVIEW

HI-FI WORLD



Low Blow

If you like punchy lows then Jamo's C 95 II floor standing loudspeaker may be for you, thinks Noel Keywood.

If you want strong bass a floor stander is a must. And if you want to go loud without strain, then same again. There are no shortage of floorstanders on the market as a result and most do a pretty good job – and that's the case with Jamo's C 95 II I am reviewing here, from their Concert series. It's a good loudspeaker combining old and new flavours I felt. Price a very reasonable £700.

As Jamo say, this is a two way design, meaning it has a bass/midrange unit – centre in the drive unit array – crossing over to a tweeter at top. The tweeter comprises a standard 1in (25mm) fabric dome surrounded by a static shallow flare horn, or waveguide; it may look like a concentric drive unit such as KEF's Uni-Q, but it is not. The bottom driver is a bass unit. At rear lies a large port to provide classic reflex loading.

Standing 982mm (39in) high, 215mm (8.5in) wide and 317mm (12.5in) deep the C 95 IIs don't intrude visually, especially with their dark tweed cloth grilles in place. Weighing 20kgs (44lbs) each they are fairly easy to move about. Jamo supply four stabilising feet with adjustable spikes, which was handy because the loudspeakers are best tilted back measurement showed, so the central bass/midrange driver fires upward slightly to ear height at the listening position. This isn't especially critical I found in set up listening tests, giving a slightly denser and more composed midband.

The drive units integrate well, measurement showed, so there's no great change in sound with

height (phasiness) but there is a large gap between the central bass/midrange driver and tweeter and this imposes a midrange dip, alternatively seen as raised bass and treble, or loudness effect. To ameliorate this Jamo have used a low crossover frequency of 1.5kHz where wavelengths are longer than the usual 3kHz. This puts more energy into the tweeter that it can – hopefully – handle.

The C 95 IIs are well made and finished, even around at the rear where a large bi-wire terminal set is fitted, solid chrome plated terminals accepting 4mm banana plugs, bare wire or spade connectors. The front grilles are held by magnets.

SOUND QUALITY

I connected the Jamo's to our Creek Evolution 100A amplifier, fed digital by an Oppo BDP-205D Universal player spinning CD, and also delivering hi-res from an Astell&Kern AK120 player connected optically. Loudspeaker leads were Chord Company Signature Reference.

Summarising what I heard before I start, these loudspeakers have subjectively obvious bass and treble, conversely meaning midrange is a little recessed. This sort of balance is being replaced by loudspeakers with more midband projection. But it has all been done well in the C 95 IIs – they come with plenty of plus points and were liked in the office whilst under review, so not just my opinion here!

Working through a series of high quality uncompressed CD review tracks I turned volume up to hear Dadawa speaking in Canton

Story – and clear she sounded. But when the drums came in I was almost knocked backward, bass is so prominent. Happily, the drum sequence had speed, power and dynamic fluidity that was impressive. But this contrast came from the Jamo's polite rendition of vocals causing me to turn volume up; speakers with better midrange presence less skew dynamic perspectives in such fashion.

What this track teased out was a lovely clear and colour free midband delivering Dadawa's soft vocals, but bass that became almost overwhelming when it appeared.

Similarly, Sinead O'Connor was a little distant singing Foggy Dew, whilst the Chieftains drums had powerful presence. Dramatic, that's for sure – and these speakers have a supple and fast low end that I suspect a lot of listeners will love. They get bass 'right' as it were. There's plenty of it, and great resolution too.

With Hugh Masekela's Stimella



A modern synthetic cone bass/midrange unit with alloy phase plug. Low colouration.



A large rear port helps provide clean low bass. Below it sits a neat recessed bi-wire panel with solid chrome plated terminals.

the strong output of the tweeter brought a sibilant hiss to “stimella”, but this apart the performance was fast, clean and clear at normal listening levels. When I turned volume right up though the word “stimella”, with its high frequency ‘st’ sibilants, took on a obviously sharp quality with grilles off, ameliorated by putting the grilles on. I preferred the latter.

The powerful synth drum of Safri Duo’s Samb Alegreo had enormous presence in our large room (6500 cu ft) so in smaller rooms it may be best to use foam bungs in the ports. The C 95 IIs

don’t lack bottom end power, that’s for sure.

Keb Mo’s solitary vocals in Every Morning were laid back – not pushed out into the room; they were also a little box bound. But at the same time his slide guitar work was made delightfully obvious, finger picking of the strings delineated and crystal clear. Different perspectives from

triangle strikes rang out clearly though; the top end projects.

CONCLUSION

Emphasised bass and treble gave a sound balance with obvious low and highs. With tweed grilles on, upper treble is usefully tamed. Summarising, Jamo have engineered in fine bass quality and sparkling treble, allied to impressively neutral

“Jamo have engineered in fine bass quality and sparkling treble”

what is becoming common with loudspeakers having a flatter response.

Tchaikovsky’s litting Waltz of the Flowers (24/96), from the Bruckner Orchestra, sounded smooth, clear and totally uncoloured. But it was a little held back, not lifting out into the room. Kettle drum also hung back in the box to a small degree. Occasional

midrange delivery. I enjoyed these loudspeakers as a result. Their tonal balance is a little inaccurate, tailored for a bit of added drama shall I say, but if you want powerful bass, shimmering treble and a lively quality that comes across as natural, these speakers are worth hearing, since what they do they do very well. Easily 5 Globes by popular consent at Hi-Fi World!

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

Jamo’s Concert 9 C 95 II tweeter is distant from its bass/midrange driver and as a result gave differing results according to microphone position. With measuring microphone midway between tweeter and woofer, the conventional measurement axis, there is a roll off in output from the bass/midrange driver before the tweeter takes over above a low 1.2kHz. Then output increases to +2dB above level up to 500Hz.

The balance changed to become more even with the microphone aimed

at the upper bass/midrange unit and our analysis shows this. Treble still lifts, as does lower bass but the midband is reasonably smooth. The grille reduces this lift slightly by 1dB or so.

Bass reaches down to a low 35Hz, the large rear port tuned to 42Hz supporting output down to 30Hz. The C 95 II will give strong bass and the port provides good bass damping, so this is a loudspeaker well tailored to give strong but tuneful bass.

Sensitivity measured a high 88dB sound pressure level (loud) from one nominal Watt (2.8V) of input, meaning amplifiers of 40 Watts will go very loud. Not much more is needed and lower powers will probably be more than enough for most situations. An overall impedance value of 5 Ohms, measured using pink noise, is on the low side but acceptable as all modern transistor and valve amplifiers are designed to cope.

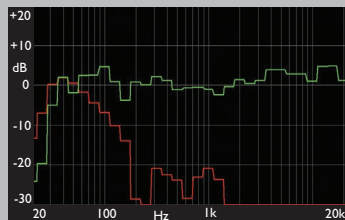
The impedance trace is conventional for a two-way, showing good bass damping with low residual peaking, low minima of 4 Ohms and a low crossover frequency of 1.2kHz for the tweeter where 3kHz is usual.

The C 95 II gives best result on the axis of its upper bass/midrange unit so should be tilted back to fire upward to typical seated ear height. It should be used with grille on to restrain treble.

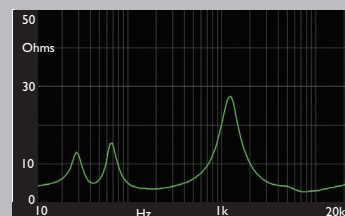
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FREQUENCY RESPONSE

Green - driver output
Red - port output



IMPEDANCE



JAMO CONCERT 9 C 95 II £700



OUTSTANDING - amongst the best

VALUE - keenly priced

VERDICT

Clean and clear - with strong bass and treble

FOR

- uncoloured
- strong, supple bass
- appearance

AGAINST

- not tonally neutral
- occasional sibilance

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