

Test: stand-alone loudspeaker Geithain ME150

Studi ...



I get suspicious when unsolicited advance praise bombards me from all sides. And this praise wasn't about me. It just flew in my direction each time the subject of Saxony firm musicelectronic geithain gmbh and its products came up.

Reader suggestions to review something there have dribbled in at a steady clip, including from pros (about both hifi and studio offerings) and apparent competitors.

In the final analysis, most persuasive remained the fact that these speakers have little to do with short-lived hype. While relatively unknown still in the hifi sector, Geithain is far from a nobody in recording and broadcast studios. Add a 40-year and occasionally twisty company history (refer to "Historisches" on their website) which should have left more than a few added wrinkles in company chef Joachim Kiesler's face and we hopefully arrive at a well-matured product focus. Our loaner certainly sported individualistic design choices which even veer a bit to the rustic. For most, Geithain's ME150 won't impress with advanced industrial design but fine and solid construction. On irresistible charm, my girlfriend saw no womanizer presence when -- whatever exactly I was to read into that -- she called it a "sympathetic visage".

Failing to ascertain just how my personal mug compared, my focus was squarely on the 3-way Geithain's obvious coax driver. Its geometry triggers instant questions: Why float the tweeter in front of the midrange rather than embed it into a unified dual-concentric with two voice coils? Geithain's business and project manager Olaf August had the answer: "This geometry avoids turning the midrange cone into a wave guide for the tweeter. That sidesteps



undesirable beaming and colourations from immediate reflections. It's a typical issue for horns and waveguides easily demonstrated by cupping your hands around your mouth while observing tonal changes in your voice. Then consider that a conventional coax's waveguide moves. That creates inter-modulation distortion. Our solution also allows us to place the tweeter off-center. This further undermines shaped wave effects."

That in this way the tweeter can work less influenced by the midrange is intuitive. What's not is why the midrange (a particular design strong point) would enjoy having to work in the shadow of the tweeter assembly: "In our case, that's not a disadvantage but deliberate asset. We use this assembly as a mechanical midrange filter to not require steep electrical slopes. We also tune beaming effects and associated depth perception to our ideals. This roots in our studio monitors which are sensitive to proper microphone proximity." The bass reflex port of the ME 150 fires down by the way.



No less distinctive than the double-decker coax construction is the anthracite MDF outer baffle which houses both dual-concentric (25mm tweeter above 2.5kHz, 160mm midrange) and 160mm woofer (below 300Hz) and, beside visual detailing, increases material density for resonance attenuation. Then there's in-house driver design and manufacture in the town of Geithain for which the firm is named. Even magnetization of motors and the forming of foam surrounds (for the larger models' woofers) are handled personally. These folks take very serious not only easy access to eventual replacement parts but full control over driver QC. The only exceptions are the enclosures. They are built in a wood shop not far from the firm's own headquarters.



Equally not left to chance are post-sale setup and measurements in your own four walls - though the measurement service is available for their active systems only. For passive speakers like the ME150, you get setup and perhaps room acoustic advice that's subcontracted to a service provider. Their fees start at an hourly rate of €48 (including tax) plus travel costs. That should pay rather higher sonic dividends than many of the expensive tuning gizmos that are hawked in this sector. Of interest too is that said provider hits the German roads for an annual tour (usually in February) when special rates are offered.

Sound

Geithain's ME150s easily integrated into my listening space into the usual slots vacated by prior speakers. Only toe-in asked for subsequent adjustments to arrive at a smack-on-axis angle for best tonal balance. But one certainly would never call this speaker setup challenged. It's mostly plug & play. What should one expect from

a speaker with a more or less specialized studio lineage? Geeky but sterile perfectionism with the emotional depth of a rhinoceros? If that be your assumption, hold on tight. This 3-way is endowed with substantial turn-on factor. It is powerful and richly colored as well as dynamic. Be it peppy toms, brutal synthesized beats, plucked string blister or otherwise angular impulses, the Geithain ME150 knows how to deliver it all.



Recoil's "The Killing Ground" completely falls apart with sterile or 'lush life' hifi kit. Commencing quite subdued, the song suddenly erupts into bass and beats which should massage your ear drums with clean contours while Joe Richardson's insistent vocals should ride on urgency and intensity. All this the Geithains handled with aplomb, supported ably by a cleanly defined bass foundation with proper depth and a powerful, full-bodied yet very resolved mid band. The latter really is the whipped cream here. To suss out warmth, body, microdynamics and resolving power in this range asks for Stig Nilsons' album Solo+ to give us some famously virtuoso violin pure.

Ideally, this good recording makes audible the finest of vibrations and noises - the pressure of bow tension on the string, the latter's micro reactions. The violin's sudden dynamic swings should be tracked effortlessly and scaled appropriately. Weak-assed hifi simply undermines the fun here. Lastly, things should be neither lean nor unduly hard or this music will quickly become tough to digest. To get right to the point, Geithain's ME150 nailed all of it even compared to superb speakers like Thiel's CS 2.4s which operate with equally precise microdynamics and a tad more sheen but render the violin less organic, sonorous and rich.

Nearly redundant then is to mention that the spoken voice too demands a hat's off. Quincy Jones' Jazz Corner of the World is a record which my colleague Martin Mertens brought along on a curiosity visit. It sports well-done rap recorded well. I'm admittedly no great friend



of the genre but I did have to admit that the Geithains hung in tight with pressure, intelligibility and -- vital for the groove -- sprung timing that had my ears at hello. Big movie is how some hip-hop fans might call it.

Before I follow such praise with criticism since you know that the perfect, purely virtuous speaker doesn't exist, I'll stack another praise atop the growing pile: soundstaging. Besides a first-rate sorted, crisply defined virtual stage, this speaker (yeah, it's worn but fits) knows how to convey the "in the midst of it rather than sidelined" feeling. Geithain's ME150 belongs to those speakers which aren't above moving the shortest line between them toward the listener at times without invoking any forwardness. You'll never have the images nailed to your forehead. Robust believable depth always remains.

Now for the obligatory nit. I had initial issues with the treble which also influenced the otherwise first-rate staging qualities. But let's start at the beginning and how literal plug 'n' play wasn't quite happening, not due to any setup or room acoustic problems but the biwire terminals. Say what? Pragmatically no fan of biwiring, I usually swap out the stock metal jumpers for cabled variants and call it a day, especially if subsequent listening elicits nothing suspicious. In the ME150's case, such a rewire seemed unnecessary as they already came with apparently quality cable bridges.



Thus run however, the Saxony dames seemed too earthbound, lacking air in the uppermost band. Cymbals as in Øystein Sevåg's "Hanging Gardens" were a tad coarser and less refined, piano runs and strings somewhat duller than usual. Staging too suffered. Coincident with a lack of air is routinely a lack of cohesion, of filler between the individual stage actors. Additionally, stage height often reduces too. All of this improved when I swapped in my customary cable jumpers. To avoid misunderstanding, those are neither particularly recommended nor is their regular use the result of endless comparisons. For whatever reason, those here simply did the job better than the stockers. While at chasing air and contrary to my usual practice, I also wired up a quite costly Atlas biwire cable (which I'm not outright recommending either as though it were mandatory in this case).





While this didn't transform the Geithains into full-on aerators, the earlier criticism no longer had due cause. Even though colleagues Ralph and Martin could appreciate my observation that both the Sehring 703SE and Thiel CS2.4 had a tad more on offer in this area, their listening pleasure over the comparably affordable ME150 wasn't impacted. The Geithains add bass and dynamics over the Sehrings; midrange color and warmth over the Thiels. As often, air is a matter of personal taste to undermine ultimate quantitative statements. To wrap up, I'll quote from an e-mail I received from the usually reticent Martin after our joint session: "Plain

randy operators" he called the Geithains, thankfully following up his loose tongue with a "sorry for the slang" apology.

Conclusion

To go straight for the jugular, I've rarely hosted a speaker – and certainly not at this price – which avoided standard criticism to this degree. Nobody is perfect though and certainly no speaker. Due to withholding the last word in treble effulgence, room acoustics and the remainder of the chain will become important adjuncts for that quality depending on your expectations and habits. But if your speakers budget be €5000 or higher, you simply must audition these!



Geithain's ME150 is a form-follows-function design characterized by...

- An always pleasing, emotionally involving response due to dynamics and expanded tone colors
- A properly deep and defined bass with immaculate timing
- An equally full-bodied yet precisely rendered midband which captures voices and instruments with transparency and realistic warmth and body
- Staging which conveys an 'in the midst of it' impression with edge definition and impressive depth
- Freedom from hardness or other long-term-unfit attributes coupled to pleasing neutrality
- A treble presentation just shy of ultimate air which, if desired, can be tweaked by experimentation with bi-wiring
- A more rustic-solid than sophisticated appearance



Facts:

- Model: Geithain ME150
- Concept: 3-way bass reflex with coax unit
- Finish: MDF with Ash, Birch, Cherry or Bird's Eye Maple - custom options demand a surcharge
- Sensitivity: 85dB / 1W / 1m
- Nominal impedance: 4 Ohm
- Dimensions and weight: 1040 x 285 x 330mm (H x W x D), 26kg/ea.
- Other: Biwire terminals

- Website: www.me-geithain.de
- Phone: (+49) 34341 3110





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