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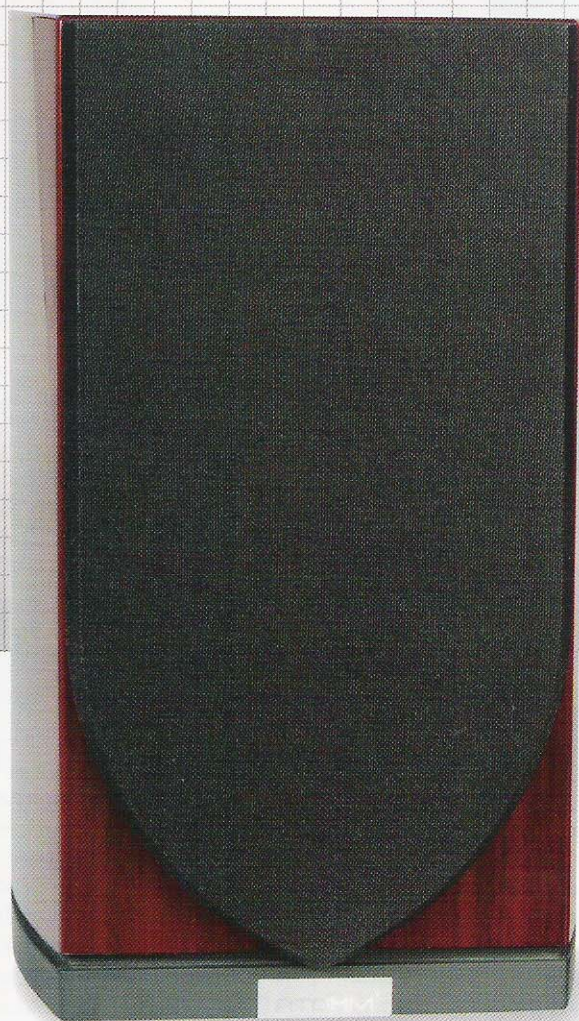
ATOHM

ATOHM IN AUSTRALIA

Loudspeakers from French loudspeaker manufacturer Atohm are now available in Australia for the first time. The first model released was the Atohm GT1.0 bookshelf/stand-mount model that marries a 150mm bass driver with a 28mm dome tweeter and claims a 45Hz–30kHz (–3dB). The crossover frequency is 2.5kHz. Although the crossover is a standard first-order type, designer **Thierry Comte** says he uses 'TCC Technology' to ensure the tweeter is time-aligned with the bass/midrange driver. Rather unusually, the GT1.0 has a high-frequency attenuator switch that, although it's rotary, offers only three positions: +1.5dB, 0dB and –1.5dB. **Alan Grau**, of Audio Waves California, who has been selling Atohm in the US for many years, says of the GT1.0: 'It looks great and is very well made,' he said. 'It has excellent bass extension and great sound-staging. This speaker gets it right—it's dynamic, clean, open and live!' If the name Thierry Comte sounds familiar, it's likely because he's a partner in Waterfall Audio (the other partner in Waterfall is **Cedric Aubriot**). Not surprisingly, all Waterfall Audio speaker use Atohm drivers. **Boris Granovsky**, of Absolute HiEnd, says he's thrilled to be able to distribute Atohm in Australia, and also that he's the first distributor to ever do so. 'The new GT1.0 is a very interesting product at very good price,' he said. It retails in Australia for \$4,990.

For further information, please contact Absolute HiEnd on (04) 8877 7999 or visit the website at www.absolutehiend.com





Atohm GT 1.0

LOUDSPEAKERS

There's no doubt that, like the Italians, the French have flair. Or a chic '*je ne sais quoi*'. Check out the country's main audio companies (especially the loudspeaker manufacturers) and you will find distinctive products incorporating innovations and examples of lateral thinking of a standard that would make engineers from other parts of the planet green with envy. Hand-crankable propagation-aligning spinal rib-like enclosures à la Focal's Utopia? Spherical enclosures bearing quad-axial drivers *chez* Cabasse? Ceiling-reaching stacked enclosures with exotically-designed bullet-shaped tweeters per Triangle? I could go on...

Atohm is another French speaker manufacturer, and a relatively new one at that, but

one with a somewhat more conventional penchant for beauty in design and sound. Thierry Comte, who was formerly Technical Director at Triangle, has decided to go it alone and is now at the helm of Atohm, designing products that reap the benefits of his vast experience in loudspeaker design and production. The subject at hand is the entry stand-mount speaker in the flagship GT range—the GT 1.0.

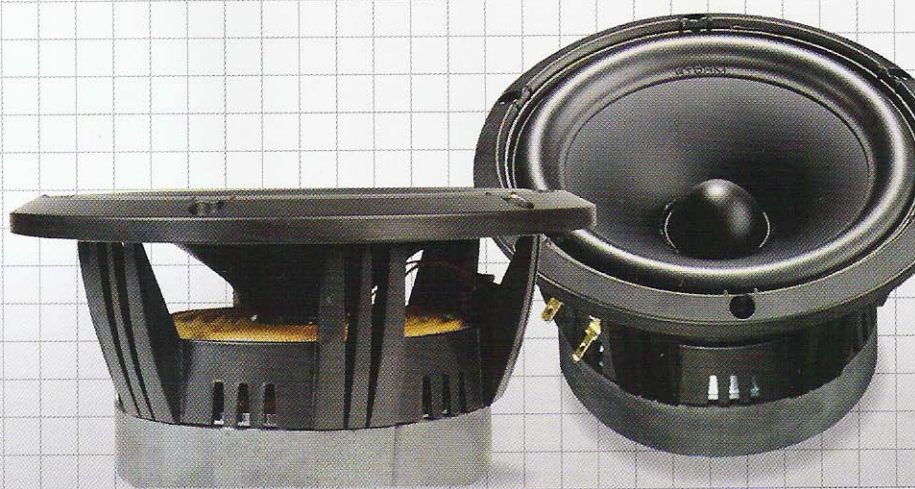
THE EQUIPMENT

The GT 1.0 speakers come solidly triple-box packed and double-bag protected. The 'bag inside a bag' arrangement serves not only to protect the stunning finish (more on that later) but one of the sacks is soft enough to serve as a polishing cloth. No matter how

pedantic you may be, as you un-bag the GT 1.0, you won't fail to be impressed by the build quality and overall fit and finish of the cabinetry.

Also in the box—and most unusually—you will find that Atohm actually provides a choice of two baffle grilles. Both attach via embedded magnets with the full-sized bullet-shaped grille just about covering the speakers' fascia while opting only for the smaller circular one provides protection for the 153mm mid/woofer (that's its overall diameter, the Thiele/Small diameter is 114mm, for an Sd of 102cm²). Of course, this last grille is removable as well for that '*à la naturelle*' look—my preferred option.

The GT 1.0's drivers are of very high quality and, according to Atohm, are designed



in-house. Both the tweeter and the mid/woofer have large magnet structures and good materials quality. The 28mm aluminium dome tweeter is ferro-fluid-cooled and its high-frequency response is quoted to extend up to 30kHz. The solid machined aluminium faceplate in which the tweeter is housed has a shallow flare which is dimpled in a precise pattern—Atohm calls it an 'Anamorphic Dispersion Pattern' (ADP)—and says this technique provides 'better off-axis dispersion characteristics.' The mid/woofer features a cellulose fibre diaphragm with a rubber roll surround of specific profile (Low Diffraction Surrounding (LDS)).

■ A wide and open soundstage spreading well beyond the speakers' edges, very good depth, and precisely-placed images...

Its low-frequency performance is assisted by means of the enclosure being a bass reflex alignment, using a rear-facing port (430×150mm).

Atohm specifies the GT1.0's response as 45Hz to 30kHz with no dB latitudes, its sensitivity at 89dB SPL at a distance of one metre for an input level of 2.83V and a 6Ω nominal impedance. The crossover between the drivers is quoted as being at 2.5kHz. Good-quality binding posts are featured around the rear and are placed just below a large rotary knob which allows tweeter level trimming of ±1dB for fine-tuning to room acoustics.

This is a stunning-looking little transducer: My review samples were dressed in an immaculately-applied gloss lacquer over gorgeous Rosewood. The GT 1.0 is also available in black and white piano gloss (I saw an example of the white gloss at the distributor's warehouse, and it was absolutely stunning).

I quickly found that the GT 1.0 needed a bit of running-in with the tweeter sounding a tad forward and sibilant and the bass a bit lean straight out of the box. Given some moderate level music playback for a break-in period of around 50 hours tamed and loosened things up remarkably. In fact the bass ended-up being surprisingly full for a speaker of its size (that huge magnet pays dividends).

LA MUSIQUE

We have all heard the term 'disappearing act' when it comes to speakers... hell, some of us lucky ones have even experienced it. Well the GT 1.0s certainly are the archetypal summation of that term. These speakers project a slightly forward soundscape that is totally independent of the enclosures; to the point of tricking the ear-to-eye information process. But you expect this from small stand-mount speakers, right? Well... yes. But, boy, these Atohms perform that trick well. The soundscape was an amalgam of a wide and open soundstage spreading well beyond the speakers' edges, very good depth, and precisely-placed images.

Also impressive for a small speaker was the handling of complex and dynamic material. The GT 1.0 was adept at dynamic contrast—more notably in the bass—in a way akin to larger designs; quite remarkably, actually, for such a small driver. Any Rodrigo y Gabriela track came across with the couple's signature

ATOHM GT 1.0 LOUDSPEAKERS

Brand: Atohm

Model: GT 1.0

Category: Bookshelf Loudspeakers

RRP: \$4,990

Warranty: Two Years

Distributor: Absolute HiEnd

Address: PO Box 370, Ormond VIC 3204

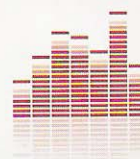
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- Superb mids
- Fit 'n finish
- Can tailor tweeter's response



- Impedance
- Deep bass
- No bi-wire

LAB REPORT

Readers interested in a full technical appraisal of the performance of the Atohm GT 1.0 should continue on and read the LABORATORY REPORT published on page 99. Readers should note that the results mentioned in the report, tabulated in performance charts and/or displayed using graphs and/or photographs should be construed as applying only to the specific sample tested.



Lab Report on page 99

power and dexterity relatively intact. And while coping remarkably well with such difficult material in terms of dynamic fidelity, the driver duo also excelled at detail retrieval, instrument separation and accuracy to harmonic structure. It's a fast sound too, with a sense of bee-bop pace that jets the music along, while the transient snap and vivid micro-dynamic detail on tap here renders small finger-nail and steel string interactions dramatically real-sounding.

In my test room, which is rather large, I perceived the speakers' upper range to be a tad laid-back, or recessed. The rear tweeter level adjustment was very useful here and adjusting it appropriately served to add a bit of sparkle to the upper frequencies. I notched it up to the +1 position and heard a subtle but easily-perceptible increase in treble detail and extension.


This level of overall sophistication and resolution will place some demands on your ancillary gear. As with any great speaker, the playback source and driving amplification need to be on-par. Also, I'd recommend that very solid, good-quality stands, of appropriate height, are absolutely essential in order to place



that top-notch tweeter at ear height and for its proper integration with the equally adept mid/bass driver. Also worthy of note is that as much as it's one hell of a little driver, so that it can't defy physics, it punched less like a welter-weight and more like a middle-weight. So what it *does* do is quite remarkable.

CONCLUSION

I was quite taken by the little Atohm GT 1.0. It is very refined in its handling of tonal colours and delicate detail. Its amazing sound-staging capabilities surprised me any number of times and its dynamic aptitude, although not quite stretching to the level of larger floorstanders, is impressive... especially in small to medium-sized rooms, given the diminutive enclosure and the size of the bass/midrange driver.

So, bearing in mind that the GT 1.0 is the entry point to the GT range, and all things being equal, I expect to hear even greater things from its larger stable-mates. It's certainly evident that French newbie Atohm has a very bright future.  **Edgar Kramer**

LAB REPORT ON PAGE 99

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