

HEARING IS BELIEVING

ADAM Audio step into the headphone market with new Studio Pro SP-5 headphones...

ADAM Audio are known for their excellent monitors that grace many a bedroom/project studio as well as full-blown professional spaces. Their knowledge in the sound department is second to none and with this know-how they have decided to venture into the studio headphone department with their new Studio Pro SP-5. The new headphones have been made in collaboration with Ultrasone, another German company who have over 25 years of expertise in the headphone market, so the pairing of these two heavyweights is sure to result in a pair of headphones that are perfect for studio monitoring and mixing.

The new headphones are of a closed-back design, which means they're also good for vocal and recording sessions as the closed-back nature of the ear cups eliminate audio spill. We tested this out and the SP-5 didn't have any noticeable leakage. The phones sit comfortably on the user's head and the design facilitates a tight fit. In fact, the design of the headphone is very similar to the design that Ultrasone use in their own build of headphones and the only noticeable difference is the ADAM Audio logo adorning the side of each ear cup. We spoke with ADAM Audio as to why the headphones share the same construction and design and if they were just duplications of Ultrasone's existing studio headphones, and they explained: "During the product design, the components were returned and revoiced, all based on the direction of our engineers. That's how we achieved the sonic goal we had in mind for these headphones, which are not a simple copy of existing Ultrasone models."

The idea is that ADAM's version have their own sound signature, based on the company's own sound narrative, and offer the user a slice of the ADAM world and not just a label endorsement of another brand's product. We actually tested out the SP-5 with a pair of Ultrasone that we own and noticed there was a difference in the way each headphone sounds. We also tested the SP-5 against a range of our mid- to high-end studio



headphones that we regularly use, and have to say that the SP-5 gave a very neutral and flat reproduction.

This is a good thing in terms of accuracy, as a producer, engineer etc — the true nature of your sound is important. Headphones with hyped bottom-end and bass, rich mids and highs — while sounding nice — are deceptive and won't uncover any mix mistakes if you're looking for your productions to be true. It's essential that your headphones tell the truth and are not forgiving.

These are not headphones to make your tracks sound nice, these are phones for making sure that your tracks sound right. This type of headphone on first listening might sound flat to the untrained ear but for the music professional these are gold. The SP-5 are very revealing and any unwanted frequencies pop out straight away. The sound field is very detailed and stereo placement is good. This is all aided by Ultrasone's S-Logic technology that ADAM have incorporated into their headphone, which directs and reflects the sound around

the ear and not directly into it, creating a wider soundstage and a sound that is more akin to how ears would perceive sound as if coming from a monitor and how we generally hear in the real world.

Headphones tend to fire the sound directly down the ear canal, which means that subtle shifts in the stereo field is not as noticeable as if picking out sound via conventional listening methods. We've simplified that explanation as to not go too deep into the science of it all, but the result is that the SP-5 have a very wide sound base.

If accuracy is important to you and you prefer using headphones to work, then ADAM Audio's SP-5 are worth the consideration.

AT A GLANCE

STUDIO PRO SP-5

£499

• adam-audio.com

BUILD QUALITY	8.0
EASE OF USE	9.0
FEATURES	9.0
VALUE FOR MONEY	8.0
SOUND QUALITY	9.0

HYPE

A really good accurate pair of headphones designed for anyone serious in the art of mixing and production.

GRIPE

The look of the headphone is exactly the same as Ultrasone headphones.

ADAM Audio's first foray into a pair of studio headphones is a good one. These phones are all about accuracy and truth — exactly what you need for tight accurate mixes.

VERDICT 8.6/10

PRODUCER TIPS NIHIL YOUNG

"To get the best out of your studio time, foundation is key and you need to create a strong one to work with. Choose your elements wisely, create a strong, well-layered kick, lay down a great groove and build quality sounds into it. Every element plays an important role in the piece. You want to be able to create something aesthetically pleasing but you don't want to sacrifice the purpose of your tune when creating dance music.

To start with, just pick a few sounds — even one or two. Try to keep it simple but solid. You can use just one synthesizer to make something brilliant and if you arrange it wisely, it will sound complete. As cliché as it sounds, less is sometimes more, which I have found to be true with my own productions. It's also important to think about the appeal of your creation: who's going to listen to it, who's going to play it, who's going to enjoy dancing to it. Visualise this while you create. Imagine being in front of the crowd playing it out, close your eyes, test their reaction, meditate."



MODULAR SOUNDS

PROPELLERHEAD continue to service its Reason production software with a new synth plugin, Complex-1. The new Synth Rack Extension is a modular synthesizer described by Propellerhead as "One of the most ambitious synths" it's ever made. Built up of a number of modules, the synth is perfect for 'Esoteric sonic experiments to pristine synth instrument tones to beefy basses'. Drawing inspiration from the West Coast school of synthesis, incorporating the methods of Don Buchla and the Bob Moog school of synth design, Complex-1 features a number of modules made up of oscillators, modulators, filters and sequencing devices that can be combined in a multitude of ways — exactly the same as if it was a hardware build. A very ambitious synth that offers users the freedom to really explore the synthesis side of Reason, Complex-1 comes with 150 presets to get producers started.