

by Mitch Gallagher

Hot House ARM 265

House rockin' active monitors

Type: Active 2-way monitors

Price: \$6,499 per pair, direct from manufacturer. No extra charge for red or golden oak cabinets.

Contact: Hot House,
www.hothousepro.com

Drivers: Two 6.5" woofers, 1" soft dome tweeter

Inputs: Neutrik XLR/1/4" combi jacks

Power: 250 watts RMS x 2

Controls: Level switch, low-frequency compensation, ultra-high frequency compensation

Frequency Response: ± 1 -3/4 dB, 33 Hz to 19 kHz (-3 dB @ 30 Hz and 21.5 kHz)

Dimensions: 14" x 25" x 12"

Weight: 52 lbs.

THE ARM 265 USES AN ULTRA-LOW DISTORTION RECESSED DOME TWEETER, AND A SIGNAL PATH CAPABLE OF 150 KHZ ELECTRONIC BANDWIDTH. THIS GIVES IT ACOUSTIC FREQUENCY RESPONSE TO 21.5 KHZ



\$ 6,500 for a set of monitors? Have they lost their minds? Not at all — think about it, every sound in your studio goes through those speakers at some point. Every mix, EQ, edit, and processing decision is based on what they (and as important, your room) sound like, what coloration they add, what distortions they impose. Of all the gear in your studio, monitors may be the most deserving of significant investment.

Hot House has been in the high-end monitor and amplifier business for years. Let's take a look at their ARM (Active Reference Monitor) 265 model bi-amplified monitors.

HOTTER THAN. . . .

Yes, these speakers are pricey — and bigger and heavier than nearfields. Hot House packaged the review units with Kimber Kable interconnects (Kimber Kable is also used for all internal wiring) and Dvibe isolation pads — which indeed seem to completely isolate the speakers from the room.

I tested the 265s at various distances, finally settling on seven feet from the listening position. The 265 is a virtual point source array, so vertical

positioning of the cabinets is essential. The speakers were placed away from walls, so the 3-position Low-Frequency Compensation switch on the 265's back panel was set to "Free Space," which adds 2 dB. The other settings, "Quarter Space" (for corner placement), and "Half Space" (near a wall), provide a 4 dB cut and 0 dB change respectively. There's also an Ultra High Frequency Compensation switch, which boosts highs above 12 kHz. This switch's effect is subtle but noticeable; I found it to increase the "air" and "openness" in the high end. But the 265s have fine high end without the Compensation switch on. They're extended, but smooth, not hypey.

The 265's low end is rich and deep. The best word I can use to describe it is "real." It doesn't sound boomy, woofy, or muddy. Kick drums are punchy and extended. Basses, whether upright or electric, are full, tight, and solid, even on the lowest 5-string notes. I experimented with adding a subwoofer to the 265s; while there was some improvement in the very lowest octave, I found it was unnecessary. One exception: When cranked up and confronted with bass-heavy material, the 265 woofers bottom out in ugly fashion — the price you pay for fast midrange and 30 Hz response from 6.5" drivers. If you're into thumping low-end that smacks you in the chest, you'll want a sub — Hot House makes several models well-matched to the 265.

The 265s have a switch for +4/-10 level operation, but not continuous control for trimming level. This was a problem for me as the output on my

Benchmark D/A converter is hot; I was forced to keep the monitor volume knob barely cracked open. (According to the company, a level potentiometer in the circuit would compromise the purity of the audio.) The positive to this is that the 265s have plenty of headroom to allow for great dynamic range.

The 265 mids have tremendous clarity — you'll definitely hear things in mixes that you never noticed before. Likewise, imaging is exemplary, and depth of field is extended. Whether setting reverb levels, listening for flaws in critical edits, or making subtle EQ adjustments, I found the 265s to be revealing and unflattering (in a good way) — don't expect these speakers to make you sound better than you are!

I've had the pleasure to listen to and review monitors of all sizes and at all price points. Without hesitation, I would classify the Hot House ARM 265 among the very finest. I was especially enamored of them for acoustic tracking and mixing, where their clarity and dynamics made them almost unbeatable. But they excel at everything from jazz to country to metal; if a mix sounds good on these speakers, it will sound good anywhere (assuming your room is true). It's gonna hurt to send these back. . . . EQ

Strengths:

- Tremendous clarity in midrange
- Broad, even frequency response
- Tone compensation controls
- Tight, "real" bass
- Excellent dynamics

Limitations:

- No continuously variable level control
- Low-end bottoms out at high volume
- Pricey