

Genelec 8351 Smart Active Monitors

By Paul Lau

After taking the pair of Genelec 8351 Smart Active Monitors out of their boxes and catching a glance of their sleek design and familiar shade of grey (they also come in white), I couldn't help myself; I had to plug them in and fire them up right away.

I've recently been mixing a new album, so I had a few songs lined up for my first test. I was instantly taken aback as I sat back and just listened to my latest mix. It was stellar – so real, so live. What struck me straight away was the pristine sound of my music, especially in the mid range. It popped and complemented the clarity and precision of the bass reproduction. Pretty good first impression...

I've used a number of two-way near field monitors in my studio, and since the 8351s employ a three-way design, I did a bit of investigating. The main difference, of course, is the number of speakers – two-ways have two speakers and three-ways have three speakers. Your typical three-way speaker is made up of a tweeter on top, mid-range speaker in the middle, and a woofer on the bottom. Using a crossover, the audio signal from the mixer/amplifier is split into different frequency ranges, which are in turn sent to the most appropriate speaker for reproduction.

For the 8351s, Genelec employs a unique design with a pair of identical 8.5 x 4-in. oval woofers surrounding one coaxial 5 3/4-in. midrange tweeter in the middle of the stack. The two oval woofers are hidden behind the DCW (Directivity Controlled Waveguide), which has acoustic openings around its top and bottom edges for the ACWs (Acoustically Concealed Woofers) that add to the sleek, futuristic aesthetic of the monitors. This also allows for equally

balanced performance, whether they're used in the vertical or horizontal position.



For strategic positioning and alignment, the 8351s are equipped with a vibration insulating Isolation Positioner/Decoupler (IsoPod). These help position the monitors either vertically or horizontally and also allow for the tilting of the monitors for the proper alignment of the acoustic axis. Even though you can just plug the monitors in straight away like I did, the 8351s reach their full potential and maximized performance

when calibrated with the SAM (Smart Active Monitoring) technology and GLM (Genelec Loudspeaker Manager) for your studio.

The Genelec AutoCal defines the response in your studio area and calibrates the relevant compensation to the uniqueness of your space in reference to the monitors. The set-up for the GLM control network and software is quite easy to deal with. Once the software is downloaded and you begin to calibrate the monitors to the specifics of your studio, you can actually store the settings in the monitors.

The monitors can handle SPLs up to 110dB at 1 m, which is extremely loud, but when it comes to performance, I'm all about clarity, and these delivered at every volume level.

As far as specs for the amplifiers onboard the 8351s, the tweeter is a discrete 90 W class A/B, the mid-range is a 120 W class D, and the bass is a 150 W class D, so we have excellent headroom as far as the power is concerned.

On the back of the monitors, there is a plethora of mini-switch controls that allow you to set bass roll-off, bass tilt, and treble tilt, just to name a few parameters. As far as inputs, there's one XLR analog input, two AES/EBU input/outputs, and two RJ45 control network inputs.

At the end of the day, the monitors you use to reference your recordings are one of the most critical components of your set up, and clarity and transparency are vital as far as enabling you to do your best work. On that end, Genelec delivers the highest reference quality with the 8351 Smart Active Monitors. I would have to say that these monitors are probably two of the best that I have ever heard in the studio environment. Yes, they would be a hefty investment for any studio, but with that said, they are now at the very top of my wish list.

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