



Kudos Titan 505

CHRIS KELLY GETS TO GRIPS WITH THE STANDMOUNTING 505, THE SMALLEST MODEL IN THE TITAN RANGE FROM BRITISH COMPANY KUDOS

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, kudos means “the praise and honour that goes with a particular achievement or position” or, in the USA, “special praise to somebody for something they have done”. To name your company Kudos, therefore, is pretty clear statement of intent and really demands that you design and produce products that will live up to it.

Kudos Audio, founded by audio engineer Derek Gilligan in 2005 and based in County Durham, in the north-east of England, builds and designs loudspeakers, and has three different series in production. The Titan range is the flagship and comprises four different models, numbered, 808, 707, 606 and yes, you guessed it, 505. The first three are floor-standing models but the 505, which is the subject of this review, is a standmount. Yes, it's available to buy without the dedicated stands but my review pair came with them, and I can see no reason at all for using third party option when the Kudos ones are so obviously an ideal match.

For that reason, let's start our review with those stands: each arrives in its own package, and they are really heavy! Unboxing the first we find six black legs, a chrome tube which acts as the seventh leg, a top plate and a base plate, together with screws, Allen keys and four collared floor spikes.

Earlier versions of the stand had hollow legs the user could fill with their material of choice, but these new ones come pre-filled with a sound deadening foam and when tapped are absolutely

dead, acoustically. Assembly, following the attached graphical instructions, is straightforward but requires some energy, simply because the stands are so massive. Indeed, if I were a paying customer I might hope that my retailer would take care of the assembly and siting of the 505s.

With both stands up and ready, the loudspeakers are mounted on to the top plate and fastened to it by three screws, creating the most rigid standmount arrangement I encountered. The plus side to doing it myself was that it gave me time to admire the sheer quality of the engineering, which adds hugely to my confidence that the speakers themselves have been built to a very high standard.

Those speakers – in the case of the review pair finished in Black Oak – weigh a hefty 18kg each, and are supplied with magnetically-attached grilles, which I actually preferred to remove, for both aesthetic and sonic reasons.

There is a Kudos logo on the phase plug on the main 180mm driver and the 39mm tweeter sits behind a mesh enclosure, and clearly great attention has been paid to ensuring that the cabinet is totally

HIFICRITIC
HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

Kudos Titan 505

Price £8500 (inc. stands)

Type Two-way ported cabinet

Drivers 29mm soft-dome tweeter, 2x180mm coated paper cone mid/bass units

Sensitivity 88dB/1mW

Impedance 6 Ohms nominal

Frequency response 40Hz – 30kHz

Dimensions (HxWxD) 45x25.6x32cm

kudosaudio.com



inert, but without this in any way detracting from the music. At the back are two input sockets for banana plugs only, along with the wire jumpers which can be removed for active amplification. Sensitivity is rated as 87dB/m/W and impedance a nominal 6 ohms, making these are a relatively easy load for any amplifier with more than 25 watts of power available, the suggested maximum being 250W. As always my strong advice is to get advice from your retailer. The two hundred watts available from my Lyngdorf was more than sufficient to get the 505s singing.

I manoeuvred the weighty structures into place, using as a starting point the position which best suits my own standmount loudspeakers. I attached them to my amplifier with Tellurium Q Ultra Black II cable and ran the Lyngdorf RoomPerfect software, which does such an astonishingly good job at removing the room's acoustic anomalies so that loudspeakers can be heard at their very best. I'd been advised that the speakers would need some time to settle down after being in transit, so no serious listening was done for the first 48 hours.

The temptation to listen

As we all know, that's easier said than done! I don't have a dedicated listening room - the lounge in our 2015 vintage Barratts home is where my wife and I spend our evenings - so only during the day on weekdays when she is out doing a proper job do I get it to myself to listen and to write.

Our television sound comes through whatever hifi system happens to be there at the time and so for the first 48 hours in situ here, the 505s were relaying movie soundtracks in the evening and running Qobuz playlists during the day. However, I did sit and listen to some music on the Sunday morning (having set the Kudos up on the Friday).

We were running a playlist that incorporated what one might term "soft rock" staples with some more modern pop. I thought it sounded pretty good but I wasn't blown away, putting it down to the need for the 505s needing more time to recover from their journey to Devon. The action film we watched that night sounded good though, with plenty of detail, and the dynamic swings in the soundtrack handled with aplomb.

Left alone with the Titans on the Monday morning I started to do some more critical listening, using vinyl and CD as sources. Given the reputation that the Titans have already built up both with customers and other reviewers I was expecting to be blown away. But I wasn't. The bass didn't seem to have the power and depth that I was anticipating and the presentation overall just failed to grab my attention in the way that I had expected. I have had similar experiences in the past with

"guest" loudspeakers, and have usually found that positional changes can have a significant impact. A telephone conversation with Kudos person was constructive, and I was given me some things to try, including moving both loudspeakers much closer to the rear wall, with almost no toe-in to the listening position, and as far as possible also getting the enclosures equidistant from the side walls. Trying an alternative loudspeaker cable was also suggested,, so I switched in some Audioquest Robin Hood, then reran the RoomPerfect software.

A moment of revelation

Oh my goodness! What a transformation! Suddenly, everything fell into place. The pace and rhythm of the music I played, and above all the timing, was now absolutely spot on. I worked through a vinyl and CD playlist that included my usual audition staples of Pink Floyd, Love, Bob Dylan, JJ Cale, Eric Clapton and Mark Knopfler and every album had me absolutely pinned to my seat.

These are the wrong loudspeakers to choose if you want to run music as a background to your every day tasks because they absolutely demand that you sit down and listen. What's more, the louder I played them the better they sounded. The isobaric bass enclosure, with a pair of SEAS-sourced, but Kudos-specified, main drivers blending perfectly with the K3 tweeter, again made by SEAS to Kudos' specification. The low-order crossovers are kept simple deliberately, but incorporate Mundorf MResist Supreme resistors and air-core inductors, with ClarityCap CopperConnect capacitors.

I should also mention here that all the Titan models can be used in "active" mode with amplification from Linn, Devialet, Naim or Exposure bypassing the internal crossovers. I am willing to wager that will be spectacular!

Switching to classical music, I streamed a hi-res file from Qobuz of Beethoven's 5th Symphony on the AliaVox label, performed by Le Concert Des Nations conducted by Jordi Savall. This a full-blooded account of the magnificent work and the 505s gave the performance the weight and depth which it deserves. They create a tall, wide and deep soundstage, which draws the listener into the heart of the performance. Bass is powerful but tuneful but never overwhelms the musical balance. This was classical music as a deeply rewarding, emotional listening experience.

If jazz is your thing, the Titans will also serve you well. Listening on Qobuz to the hi-res file of Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers "Just Coolin'" on Blue Note, the music is propelled along wonderfully, with each band member clearly in their own space and each instrument's personality shining through. The band leader's drums sound fantastic. Similarly,

delicate female vocals such as Gillian Welch's on her new *Boots No2: The Lost Songs* on a Qobuz HiRes file where sparse acoustic guitar and other instruments accompany her lovely voice, sometimes double-tracked.

To check how the Titan's reproduce the spoken word, I used not only the television but also listened to BBC Radio 4 via the vTuner platform. Voices sounded totally natural and came into the room with almost holographic realism. Radio listening was a pleasure through the 505s.

During the course of the review I had contacted the Kudos PR guru and asked if it would not be a good idea to use the company's recently-announced KS-1 loudspeaker cable with the Titan 505s, particularly in light of my discovery that they are a little cable-fussy. A few days later a 5m pair of said cables arrived from the factory, terminated with standard 4mm banana plugs. They are made with the same silver-plated OFC cable used internally in the Titans, with 19 strands per channel having been determined by extensive listening tests to be the optimum configuration. These cables are very self-effacing, sheathed in white PVC with no bling element whatsoever. In fact they look like typical lamp flex, but do not let that deter you! At £30 per mono meter (unterminated) they are by no means expensive when compared with some rival offerings. This pair, for example, would cost £300 plus the dealer's termination charge.

The cable is special, too

I plugged them in and left them to warm up, returning after about four hours to listen. Well blow me down! The KS-1 had a "rightness" to the sound that, in this context, was at least as good as the third party cables it replaced – but at one fifth of the cost. Bass was just as full and tuneful, the mid-range was exquisite and the top end had all the air and delicacy that one could ever expect. If you are attracted to the Kudos Titan's, try to audition them with this cable - I suspect that you will realise as I have that they are as integral to getting the most out of the loudspeakers as are the 'optional' stands.

The looks may deceive you, but I promise you that your ears will not. I plan to try them with my own loudspeakers once the Titans have been dismantled and returned to the factory: it will be interesting to hear how they perform outside the Kudos bubble.

For this review I used as sources a VPI Prime Signature turntable with a GoldNote Machiavelli cartridge playing into a Gold Note PH10 phono stage with matching PSU, a Lyngdorf CD2 player and the in-built UPnP streaming capability of the Lyngdorf TDAI 3400 integrated DAC/amplifier, as well as the same unit's vTuner for access to internet



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radio. My Internet sound benefits from the presence of a Network Acoustics ENO helping to filter out unwanted RFI, bringing streamed sound to the same high performance level as disc replay.

It's also worth noting that the Kudos website is an exemplar of design and content, and should be a great resource for owners or those contemplating a purchase. I think the eye for detail and design found there are a true window into the soul of this British company, which in just 15 years has secured a place for itself at the top table of indigenous loudspeaker manufacturers that is richly deserved.

Are the Titan 505s expensive at £8500 including the stands? That's ultimately a subjective judgement but I think they represent value for the money. They demand that you sit and listen, and the more you do just that the more you will realise that they will reward you with an extraordinary musical experience. The KS-1 loudspeaker cable is also a testament to the engineering, the integrity and ethics of the company. So kudos to Mr Gilligan - he and his products have earned the right to the name.