

TEST

Perlisten A4t

ENTRY-LEVEL FLAGSHIP AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL

Perlisten
A4t

lite Verdict
2026

94/95
Top class

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Exciting
Dynamics

Impressive
Presence





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Entry-Level Flagship at the Highest Level

The Perlisten A4t is the impressive flagship of the current A-series and already presents itself visually with its striking front design as a model from the American loudspeaker specialist.

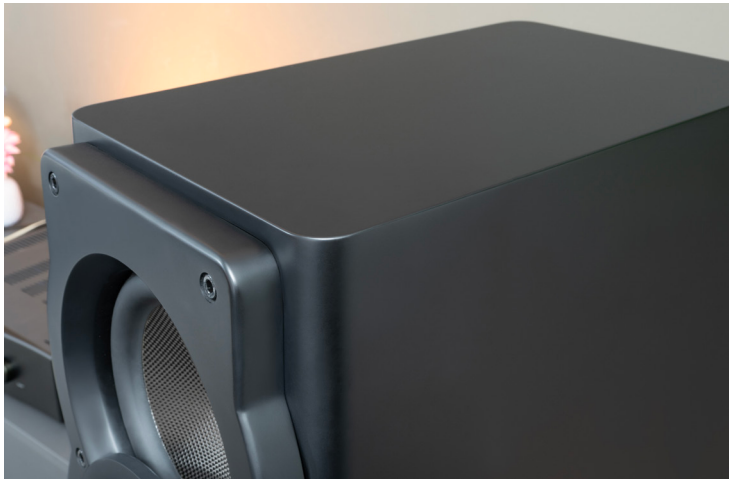
Clever Trickle-Down: The powerful A4t is the impressive flagship of Perlisten's new A-Series - and here, the loudspeaker specialist has leveraged its expertise from its high-end series to offer top-tier sound for hi-fi and home cinema at a highly attractive price point. Our test reveals whether and how well they succeeded.

With its "Perceptual Listening" philosophy, Perlisten has built a top reputation within just a few years. To enable this "attentive listening," the loudspeaker manufacturer, founded in 2016, relies in particular on controlled, directional sound dispersion to achieve perfect homogeneity at the listening position for maximum music perception while simultaneously avoiding unwanted room reflections. The Americans successfully launched their Statement Series with this approach, from which we tested the S7t. Based on this technology, the more affordable Reference series was subsequently launched with equal success, and we recently had the R5m from that series in our review. Now, Perlisten is leveraging its expertise and experience for the current A-Series to offer top-tier sound in an affordable entry-level line. The trickle-down

approach now refers to the know-how the Perlisten team has acquired through its two flagship series. While the A-Series is a completely new and independent design, it adheres to the same development principles: proprietary driver technology, optimized waveguide geometry, precise cabinet tuning, and meticulous measurements and extensive listening tests.

Impressive Presence

The imposing A4t is instantly recognizable as a Perlisten model thanks to its design and sheer size: This loudspeaker weighs a hefty 56 kilograms, stands a stately 1.29 meters tall, measures a respectable 28 centimeters wide, and extends a substantial 450 millimeters deep. The satin-black A4t makes a powerful impression right from the moment we unpack and set it up in our editorial office - its very appearance leaves no doubt about the power of its performance. The weight alone hints at the robustness of the cabinet: Perlisten uses HDF for the cabinet, even in its entry-level series, which is 35 percent denser than standard MDF. The top and bottom panels are 30 millimeters thick, the sides are 25 millimeters thick - and,



The thick-walled body, made of heavy, high-density fiberboard, is finished with a satin-matte black lacquer. The finish is flawless.



The large-volume body and the inclusion of three woofers already promise a powerful, deep-reaching performance.

also typical of Perlisten, the front panel boasts a thickness of almost 50 millimeters. Extensive internal bracing further increases the weight and also serves to stabilize the cabinet.

Special Baffle

The attached baffle serves the same purpose: in conjunction with the cabinet, it creates a "constrained layer damping" effect. Different layers of material achieve resonance damping. However, the primary function of this front panel is to optimize sound dispersion. With its



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Model:	Perlisten A4t
Product Category:	Floorstanding Speaker
Price:	€ 3,495.00 / units
Warranty:	2 years 5 years after registration
Finish:	Satin Black
Distribution:	Audio Reference, Hamburg Tel.: +49 40 53320359 www.audio-reference.de
Dimensions (H x W x D):	1,285 x 280 x 450 mm
Weight:	56 kg
Exits:	1 x 3.5 mm jack
Design:	2.5-way, passive, bass-reflex
Impedance:	- Nominal impedance: 4 Ω - Minimum impedance: 3.1 Ω
Tweeter:	1 x 35 mm (dome, Teteron composite diaphragm) with waveguide
Mid-bass drivers:	3 x 215 mm (cone, carbon fiber diaphragm)
Frequency specifications:	Linear frequency response (± 2 dB): 100 Hz - 10 kHz Frequency response: -35 Hz - 27 kHz (@ -6 dB) -28 Hz - 32 kHz (@-10 dB)
Typical bass response in a room:	-28 Hz (@ -6 dB) -19 Hz (@-10 dB)
Crossover frequencies:	500 Hz, 1.5 kHz
Recommended amplifier power:	50 - 350 W
Rating	
Sound (60%):	94/95
Practical Use (20%):	94/95
Features (20%):	94/95
Overall Rating:	94/95
Class:	Top Class (€4,000 - €8,000)
Price/Performance:	Excellent



The shape of the attached baffle, in conjunction with the tweeter's waveguide, ensures optimized sound radiation.

characteristic shape, already familiar from the S and R series, it promotes wide horizontal dispersion. Vertical dispersion, on the other hand, is restricted to minimize unwanted ceiling and floor reflections. This, along with the slight cabinet tilt, facilitates placement: This ensures optimal sound dispersion even in larger rooms and at greater distances from the listening position. The cabinet, which is virtually immovable due to its own weight, rests on two crossbars. Their outriggers further enhance stability. Rubber-coated, absorbent feet provide contact with the floor. Included spike tips can be screwed into these feet. This design is both an attractive and practical solution for hard and soft surfaces.

Doubly remarkable: the tweeter

A total of four drivers now adorn the cabinet baffle. The strikingly designed tweeter section forms the centerpiece. It differs from Perlisten's in-house developed DPC system, which is used in the S and R series: There, this "Directivity Pattern Control" with three small domes and a complex waveguide ensures that the tweeter array, firstly, reacts quickly; secondly, is very robust and plays extremely low, thus seamlessly connecting with the woofer section; and thirdly, exhibits a consistently controlled and directional dispersion pattern in its sound reproduction. This elaborate and expensive DPC system is simply too costly for the A4t. However, Perlisten still wanted to achieve a similar result and therefore developed a completely new solution – precisely because of its DPC expertise. To achieve speed, robustness, and a wide frequency response, Perlisten relies on a doubly special dome: The diaphragm measures an unusually large 35 millimeters and is made of "Composite Teteron."

Multi-functional Waveguide

"Composite Teteron" is a synthetic, polyester-based fabric. Compared to the silk used in Perlisten's R-Series, Teteron is significantly more resistant to humidity and temperature fluctuations and offers high stability at a low weight. To further enhance its robustness, this Teteron dome tweeter features a honeycomb structure on its surface: This design gives the dome greater rigidity without adding weight. The tweeter now sits at the center of a newly developed wave-



The tweeter, with its distinctive horn, is the most prominent transducer on the front. The waveguide has a slight amplifying effect, ensures a wide horizontal and reduced vertical dispersion, and better integrates the tweeter with the woofers, resulting in homogeneous sound dispersion.



The tweeter's dome is unusually large at 35 millimeters and is made of Teteron. This robust plastic has a honeycomb-like structure on its surface, which increases the dome's resistance to deformation. All of this serves the purpose of allowing the tweeter to reproduce sound down to a very low frequency: it reproduces sound down to 1.5 kilohertz, extending well into the midrange.

guide. It supports the desired wide horizontal and limited vertical dispersion. It also has an amplifying effect: This allows the dome to operate with less excursion and thus reproduce lower frequencies more easily. This enables a closer connection to the woofers surrounding the tweeter. The large and prominent tweeter waveguide extends over parts of these two woofers. This, similar to a coaxial driver, is intended to ensure a homogeneous, consistent dispersion pattern from the three drivers – even outside the sweet spot, i.e., the optimal center listening position.

Woofer Triple for Deep Bass

The pair of woofers surrounding the tweeter takes over from 1.5 kilohertz and delivers the mid-bass frequencies with a deep, rich bass that can extend down to 19 hertz in a room. They are supported by a third woofer that plays exclusively from 500 hertz downwards. The three identical 22-centimeter drivers together offer ample diaphragm area and operate in a large cabinet volume. Thus, the A4t leaves no doubt that it scores with immense power and deep bass extension. Perlisten once again utilizes its



The two cone woofers surrounding the tweeter handle the mid-bass frequencies from 1.5 kilohertz downwards. Perlisten uses a carbon fiber woven diaphragm in these identical drivers.

The back side offers a pair of sturdy, easy-grip terminals for pure single-wire operation.



expertise in these newly developed woofers - this time in the field of carbon fiber. Even though the sophisticated TPCD multi-layer diaphragm of the higher series isn't used, the advantages of the carbon fiber mesh remain: high rigidity, low weight, and good internal damping, which minimizes resonance. This enables precise and low-distortion sound reproduction. The driver is also designed for this purpose: it uses a ferrite magnet instead of a neodymium magnet and a copper shorting ring, which reduces inductance and thus further minimizes distortion.

Tuning Effort

Deep bass extension and power are also enhanced by a special bass-reflex tuning. Here, yet another new development is employed. It is the result of extensive computer simulations, real-world measurements, and listening tests. For example, Perlisten uses a front-facing vent with a large port and a rectangular opening towards the outlet in the A4t. This special geometry is designed not only to extend the frequency range but also to enable precise dynamics - with a peak level of over 113 decibels and distortion of less than three percent, as stated in the datasheet. Incidentally, the listening tests also led to the use of more expensive air-core inductors in the crossover network instead of the originally planned standard coils. During development, Perlisten even employed Klippel analysis in its Affor-



To enhance the low frequencies, Perlisten employs a proprietary bass-reflex design with a complex geometry and a large, rectangular opening facing the front. Two crossbars with robust rubber feet ensure stability and coupling to the floor. Small spikes can also be screwed into these feet if, as in this case, the speakers are placed on a soft surface.

dable entry-level series. Here, too, the Americans remain true to their established principles. This laser-based measurement method for drivers and loudspeakers serves to optimize various parameters and reduce signal distortion. Perlisten always presents the final results in addition to the technical specifications.

The Perlisten Audio A4t in Practice

Let's finally take the A4t into the listening room! Here, we connect it to our Hegel H360 and stream "A Taste of Honey" by Patricia Barber via the Lumin D3 and Qobuz to first determine the speaker placement. We begin with the classic stereo triangle setup, 40 centimeters from the wall and without any toe-in. The A4t quickly demonstrates the rich bass it delivers. The distance to the wall can easily be increased. We ultimately settle at a good 50 centimeters. Just a few degrees of toe-in are enough to keep Barber's vocals firmly centered. Further adjustments to the listening position do little to change what we've already experienced: The A4t brings us incredibly close to the musical performance. Where other speakers create a soundstage with a clear distance, the A4t practically draws us in: We are astonishingly close to the musicians - and as a result, they also appear slightly larger.

Excellent Presence

These musicians immediately command our full attention. This begins right from John McLean's acoustic guitar introduction: He plucks a melancholic melody, underpinned by delicate chords. This guitar exhibits excellent presence - not just because of its proximity. We can pinpoint its exact location in the room the moment it enters. Every note also possesses a remarkable directness: Beyond the sound of the guitar, we perceive how the fingers touch the strings and then pluck them. This requires very high resolution; otherwise, such playing sounds are lost. The fact that we can also feel them speaks to the A4t's microdynamic qualities. It is precisely these perceptible sounds, which also include the slipping and creaking noises produced when changing chords, that make a reproduction sound authentic. Thanks to the high resolution, we also hear when McLean plucks metal-wound bass strings or bare treble strings. As they rise and fall, we can even feel the wood of the amplifying guitar body.

Rounded Tone

When it comes to discussing material qualities, a loudspeaker excels in terms of three-dimensionality. With the steel of the guitar strings, it's noticeable that the brilliance never becomes harsh. The A4t already demonstrates here that it performs rather smoothly in the treble range. This perfectly complements the overall rounded tone: The A4t avoids analytical harshness or anemic neutrality. This is confirmed by Patricia Barber's performance: The jazz singer is known for her unique combination of cool detachment and intimate connection. The A4t lends her voice a certain warmth and emphasizes the intimacy – and so Barber's sonorous, clear, and now all the more captivating vocals enthrall us: It's as if she's not just singing in front of us, but for us. In close proximity, she tells us her story, as if to a trusted friend. For her understated style, she chooses finely nuanced volume changes. If a loudspeaker fails to reproduce this, the vocals sound dull. Here, they are captivating.



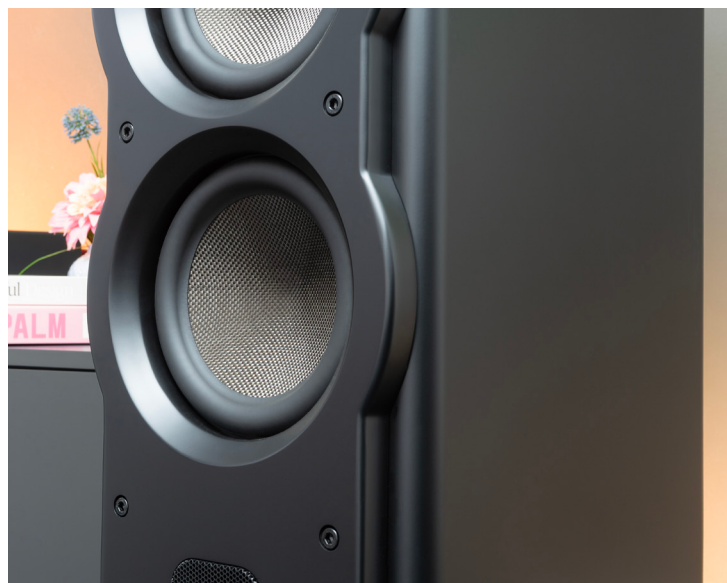
The Perlisten A4t speakers in the listening room: These potent loudspeakers are best suited to a powerful amplifier. Here, they are being played with the high-wattage Hegel H360.

Exciting Dynamics

We experience this exciting dynamics particularly with the percussion that now begins: The rattling of the maracas is so prompt and precise that we involuntarily look towards where Marc Walker seems to be shaking them. We can practically see the grains inside the maracas. Even more striking is the bongo that joins in behind them: The strikes on the two tube drums are wonderfully crisp and have great accuracy, as does the conga that joins in the middle. This creates a fantastic percussion ping-pong in the stereo panorama, which, thanks to the excellent dynamics, sounds wonderfully fresh and vibrant, so that we can hear Walker's nimble fingers tapping on the drumheads. With the percussion, Michael Arnpol enters on his double bass. Here the A4t demonstrates its bass potential: The double bass scores particularly well in the lower registers with rich power, fullness, and carrying power. Anyone who associates an acoustic double bass with a lack of blood and power will be pleasantly surprised by the A4t.

Fascinating Spatiality

A significant factor in the A4t's captivating sound reproduction is its spatial imaging. We've already mentioned its proximity to the stage. Beyond that, the A4t excels at reproducing the sound reflections captured by the recording microphones from the room where the recording took place. In this case, it was Studio 5 of the renowned Chicago Recording Company – and the A4t conjures this spacious recording room so convincingly that our actual room walls instantly become irrelevant, and we feel as if we are standing in the studio with Barber and her band as they record this song. The openness of the sound reproduction also contributes to this wonderful spatiality: it conveys a feeling of expansiveness, freedom, and airiness. With this captivating rendering of the musicians and the room, the A4t enables what Perlisten strives for: attentive listening. This is enhanced by the homogeneous sound reproduction, which is maintained even outside the sweet spot.



The third woofer is the same model as the other two cone drivers. However, it has a different function: it only kicks in at 500 Hz and supports its counterparts exclusively in the low-frequency range. With three woofers, the A4t delivers a powerful performance and a mighty, deep bass.

Impressive bass with power and depth

With these merits, Donald Fagen's "Morph The Cat" is now truly enjoyable: The song begins with bass and drums – and this combined effort alone brings a smile to our faces. Thanks to the fantastic dynamics and bass power, Keith Carlock's bass drum has the richest punch and impact, while Freddie Washington's bass impresses with its remarkable power and depth – and the A4t lets us feel this magnificent power in our gut! Although a total of thirteen musicians are involved in this track, the A4t manages to give each musician the necessary space despite the dense musical structure. Here, too, every instrument shines with a strong physical presence. The A4t's low-frequency and dynamic capabilities then make deep dubstep tracks like "If I Have To" even more impressive.

A breathtaking cinematic spectacle

Now, of course, we want to know how the A4t performs in a home cinema setting. For this, we choose the finale of "Mission: Impossible – Dead Reckoning (Part One)" – and are immediately captivated by the intense action: The explosion of the railway bridge and the crash of the locomotive are overwhelming because the A4t lets us feel the shattering force of the detonations with brutal intensity. The cascade of disasters that Ethan Hunt and Grace now experience in the precariously dilapidated train cars is breathtaking: the ominous, dull thud of the bridge's crumbling stone, the agonizing squeal of the bending metal of the train and tracks, the roar of the erupting fire and its eruptive explosion – here, the dynamic range, the three-dimensionality of the soundstage, the power and depth of the bass, the strength and control of the entire performance, and the immersive spatiality combine superbly, delivering a breathtaking acoustic spectacle to complement the visual spectacle. This is cinematic gold!

Conclusion

The A4t presents itself as an impressive flagship of the current A-series, both visually and acoustically. Thanks to clever trickle-down technology, this top model from Perlisten's entry-level series benefits from the expertise of their high-end series. The A4t delivers a powerful yet controlled performance that immediately captivates with the directness and immediacy of the sound, lending the musicians' voices and instruments excellent presence and three-dimensionality. This is achieved in part thanks to its responsive dynamics and outstanding resolution. The A4t also conjures an almost immersive soundstage with an open and airy imaging. With this striking expressiveness, the A4t enables what discerning listeners strive for: attentive listening. Sonically, the A4t offers a rich, full sound without analytical harshness or anemic neutrality, featuring a profound and powerful bass. Thanks to its bass potency, performance power, brilliant dynamics, and immersive imaging, even film soundtracks become a breathtaking spectacle. The A4t delivers top-tier sound for both hi-fi and home cinema – all at a highly attractive price point.

Perlisten always keeps home cinema use in mind: At the Home Cinema event, the A4t delivers a breathtaking sound spectacle.

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Photos: Simone Maier

