Singapore Company Update AEM Holdings Ltd

Bloomberg: AEM SP | Reuters: AEM.SI

DBS Group Research . Equity

Refer to important disclosures at the end of this report

7 Nov 2024

Non-consensus upgrade on turnaround

Investment Thesis:

Retains technological superiority in system-level test. AEM is a pioneer in providing SLT (system-level test) solutions and is around one generation ahead of its competitors. Given its technological superiority, we believe AEM is well positioned to ride on the growing SLT market that has benefitted from the increased complexity of chips and higher test coverage requirements, alongside the need for advanced heterogeneous packaging.

New technology drives growth in test spend, leading to higher

demand for AEM's offerings in the long term. Notwithstanding nearterm volatility, the semiconductor industry is well poised for growth, owing to the push towards digitalisation. McKinsey projects that the semiconductor industry will become a trillion-dollar industry by 2030. Industry megatrends such as artificial intelligence (AI), 5G, and Internet of Things (IoT) will pave the way for growth in test spend, from higher test volumes and test times. Longer test times would also require more of AEM's consumables due to wear and tear.

At the cusp of a multi-year rollout for new customers. In the past few years, AEM had announced several customer wins. As at 1H24, AEM was still mainly in the lab verification tool phase but will see a shift into production in 2H24. We believe that the AEM is near an inflexion point and foresee its customer diversification strategy yielding more significant returns starting from end 4Q24 onwards.

Upgrade to BUY with TP SGD1.67. Our TP is based on 18x FY25F earnings, which is close to -0.5SD of the historical mean and c.50% discount to peers. AEM is currently trading at undemanding valuations of c.13.8x FY25F earnings. We reduce our FY25F earnings estimates by 24% due to more conservative estimates on new customer contributions, industrial weakness affecting CEI, and lower gross margin assumptions. Despite the earnings revision and consensus having a negative view on the stock, we take a contrarian stance, believing that most of the negatives should be in the rearview mirror and call for a BUY as we look ahead to FY25 and beyond where AEM is at the cusp of a multi-year rollout for new customers.

Key Risks

Slower ramp at new customers, key customer weakness

At A Glance

Issued Capital (mn shrs)	313
Mkt. Cap (SGDmn/USDnm)	382 / 288
Major Shareholders (%)	
Venezio Investments	12.5
Employees Provident	9.9
abrdn plc	7.8
Free Float (%)	63.8
3m Avg. Daily Val (USDmn)	3.0
GIC Industry : Information Technology / Semiconductors a Semiconductor Equipment	&

BUY (Upgrade from HOLD)

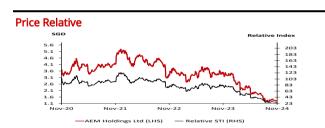
Last Traded Price (7 Nov 2024): SGD1.22 (STI: 3,673.49) Price Target 12-mth: SGD1.67 (37% upside) (Prev SGD1.34)

Analysts

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What's New

- Upgrade to BUY with higher SGD1.67 TP on earnings turnaround and undemanding valuation at c.10-14x FY25-26F earnings
- At the cusp of a multi-year rollout for new customers with new business revenue to double to in FY25 (c.30% revenue)
- Lackluster contributions from Intel could bottom in 2H24
- FY25 pre-exceptional earnings to grow 2x followed by 39% y/y in FY26



Forecasts and Valuation FY Dec (SGDmn)	2023A	2024F	2025F	2026F
Revenue	481	347	432	489
EBITDA	65.5	46.0	72.0	87.9
Pre-tax Profit	7.59	6.49	34.8	48.3
Net Profit	(1.2)	5.39	28.9	40.1
Net Pft (Pre Ex.)	25.5	9.79	28.9	40.1
Net Pft Gth (Pre-ex) (%)	(79.9)	(61.7)	194.8	39.0
EPS (S cts)	(0.4)	1.73	9.27	12.9
EPS Pre Ex. (S cts)	8.21	3.14	9.27	12.9
EPS Gth Pre Ex (%)	(80)	(62)	195	39
Diluted EPS (S cts)	(0.4)	1.73	9.27	12.9
Net DPS (S cts)	0.0	0.0	2.32	3.22
BV Per Share (S cts)	150	152	159	169
PE (X)	nm	70.5	13.2	9.5
PE Pre Ex. (X)	14.9	38.8	13.2	9.5
P/Cash Flow (X)	9.3	20.8	2.8	2.6
EV/EBITDA (X)	6.3	8.9	4.2	2.1
Net Div Yield (%)	0.0	0.0	1.9	2.6
P/Book Value (X)	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.7
Net Debt/Equity (X)	0.1	0.1	CASH	CASH
ROAE (%)	(0.2)	1.1	6.0	7.9
Earnings Rev (%):		0	(24)	-
Consensus EPS (S cts):		9.70 P.1	22.0	21.1
Other Broker Recs:		B: 1	S: 2	H: 3

Source of all data on this page: Company, DBS, Bloomberg





WHAT'S NEW

Snagging a chip bargain before it flies

We are upgrading AEM to BUY with a higher TP of SGD1.67. We believe that AEM is at an inflexion point with new customers, and potential for the new fabless AI customer to grow into a key customer account, while Intel revenue should stabilise from 2H24 onwards.

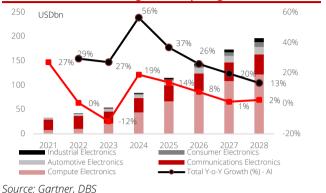
At the cusp of a multi-year rollout in contributions from new customers. Over the course of the past few years, AEM had announced several customer wins in the areas of memory, XPU, and systems & hyperscalers. As at 1H24, AEM is still mainly in the lab verification tool phase but will shift into production in 2H24. We believe that AEM is near an inflexion point and foresee its customer diversification strategy yielding more significant returns starting from 4Q24 and into FY25 and beyond. AEM expects new business revenue to double in FY24, and double again in FY25, reaching triple-digit millions.

Spotlight on new fabless Al customer... Amongst AEM's new customers, we are of the view that the fabless Al customer holds the most promise of growing to be a key customer account for AEM. For one, Al is a high growth segment within the semiconductor industry, and we believe that there is scope for other Al contenders besides Nvidia to thrive in a growing market. Beyond the initial pre-production verification phase, we understand that large fabless customers typically also dictate test tools installed at their OSAT partner during mass production, reinforcing the case that the opportunity from new customers is not just one-off but a multi-year prospect.

... with potential to mirror the success story with Intel. Additionally, the new fabless customer is operating in similar end markets of client computing and data centres, areas where the success of AEM's offerings has been tried and tested with key customer Intel. This gives us optimism that the success could be mirrored with the new fabless AI customer although we acknowledge that it is somewhat premature to say with certainty that AEM can achieve the same magnitude in contributions from the new fabless customer.

Key milestones to watch: the pace of customer contributions and new program acquisitions. While still nascent, we believe that AEM's intent is to acquire more programme wins across test insertions which are steps towards developing the new fabless AI customer into a key customer account in the future. Key milestones to monitor include significant contract wins or new program acquisitions. Currently, AEM has announced that its advanced SLT insertions will be used for next generation AI devices, and they will also be supplying automated burn in test solutions to the major fabless provider of AI chips.

Al semiconductor revenue growth outpacing overall market



Addressing the big elephant in the room – lackluster contributions from Intel could bottom in 2H24. We estimate contribution from Intel at c.SGD150mn per year in FY25-FY26 and our assumptions are as follows:

- SGD100mn in base revenue (excluding incremental revenue from non-cancellable POs) from Intel per year. We estimate that Intel's contribution will be around SGD50mn in 2H24 (vs SGD 90mn in 1H24), based on management's comments that Intel's share of test cell solutions reach parity or cross over to nearly 50:50 as we approach the end of the year. Despite a recovering semiconductor market and consensus expecting Intel's volumes to grow by low-mid single digits, we believe that an annualized base revenue of SGD100mn in FY25-26 (-c.40% v/v compared to our FY24 estimates) is fair given Intel's intention to save USD500m+ annually on test spend. We are projecting a flattish base revenue from 2H24 onwards as wallet spend from Intel has already been reduced substantially and we think that the bulk of savings from reducing non-standard tests should have already been incorporated.
- Incremental SGD50mn from drawdown of purchase orders annually between FY25-FY27. Given the take or pay arrangement, Intel would have to start drawing down on its SGD280mn non-cancellable purchase order (first mentioned during 3Q22 results release). Our channel checks indicate that this will be over the span of 1Q25 to 2H27 and we have conservatively projected an annual incremental boost of c.SGD50mn to revenue from Intel between FY25 and FY27 (totaling c.50% of the contract value). This estimate considers partial fulfillment of the contract, with the remainder forming part of the base revenue.

Live more, Bank less

AEM Holdings Ltd

Intel unit sales (#k)



Source: Visible Alpha, DBS

Summary of key revenue assumptions

FY25	 SGD151mn from Intel (base SGD100mn, PO SGD51mn) SGD 130mn from new customers SGD151mn from CEI
FY26	 SGD154mn from Intel SGD170mn from new customers SGD166mn from CEI
Changes to our new business estimates	Despite optimism on its new customer momentum, we acknowledge that product rollouts at end markets are uncertain, which may defer but not halt the ramp of AEM offerings to new customers. We therefore temper our expectations and pare back our estimates for revenue from new test insertions to SGD65mn and SGD130mn for FY24 and FY25, accounting for 20-30% of our full year estimates.

Source: DBS estimates

Despite the cut in new customer contributions, AEM's revenue/earnings are still expected to grow by 24.7%/194.8% y/y (pre exceptionals) in FY25 after the slump in FY23-24. Thereafter, we project revenue/earnings to recover 13.1%/39.0% in FY26 on the back of new customer contributions.

Key risks are momentum of new customer contributions and magnitude of decline from key customer. Changes to the macroeconomy or customers' operating environment may affect product rollouts which could delay new customers' uptake of AEM's solutions. In addition, while we have projected a c.40% decline in base revenue from Intel, more aggressive than expected cost cutting measures at Intel pose a risk to AEM. Further, Intel's 5N4Y strategy, which involves transitioning to smaller process nodes, could benefit AEM by extending test times. However, this advantage could be counterbalanced by Intel simplifying its product roadmap and reducing the number of product variants in its portfolio. Valuations fairly reasonable with negatives likely priced in. On a PE basis, AEM currently trades at 13.8x FY25 earnings, below -0.5SD of the historical mean. Valuations are also depressed on a PB basis, with AEM trading below book value at 0.8x. We believe that pessimism surrounding the key customer has been priced in and market sentiment appears to be stable with the share price mainly rangebound. While the upcoming 3Q24 results is still expected to remain weak given that an initial order of >SGD20mn will only ship in 4Q24, we are calling for a BUY as we look ahead to FY25 and beyond where AEM is at the cusp of a multi-year rollout for new customers. Any dips or weaknesses going forward could be good opportunities to accumulate as we remain convicted by the longer-term story of AEM.

AEM discount to peers below average



Source: Bloomberg, DBS

Note: Peers comprise Advantest, Teradyne, and Cohu

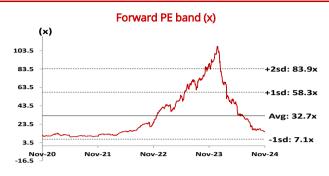
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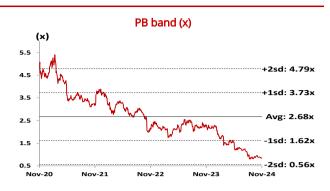
Company Background

AEM is a solutions provider for the back-end testing of the semiconductor manufacturing process. It works closely with its key customer Intel to design, engineer, and manufacture the test handlers. AEM then provides field support and post-sales replacements.



Historical PE and PB band





Source: Bloomberg, DBS estimates

Source: Bloomberg, DBS estimates

Income Statement (SGDmn)

FY Dec	2022A	2023A	2024F	2025F	2026F
Revenue	870	481	347	432	489
Cost of Goods Sold	(597)	(352)	(260)	(316)	(352)
Gross Profit	274	129	86.7	117	137
Other Opng (Exp)/Inc	(113)	(88.8)	(70.1)	(77.0)	(85.0)
Operating Profit	160	40.5	16.5	39.8	51.9
Other Non Opg (Exp)/Inc	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Associates & JV Inc	(0.3)	(0.6)	0.0	0.0	0.0
Net Interest (Exp)/Inc	(1.3)	(5.5)	(5.6)	(5.0)	(3.6)
Exceptional Gain/(Loss)	0.0	(26.7)	(4.4)	0.0	0.0
Pre-tax Profit	159	7.59	6.49	34.8	48.3
Тах	(31.4)	(8.8)	(1.1)	(5.9)	(8.2)
Minority Interest	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Preference Dividend	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Net Profit	127	(1.2)	5.39	28.9	40.1
Net Profit before Except.	127	25.5	9.79	28.9	40.1
EBITDA	184	65.5	46.0	72.0	87.9
Growth					
Revenue Gth (%)	53.9	(44.7)	(28.0)	24.7	13.1
EBITDA Gth (%)	46.4	(64.3)	(29.9)	56.7	22.0
Opg Profit Gth (%)	43.3	(74.8)	(59.2)	140.6	30.5
Net Profit Gth (Pre-ex) (%)	38.2	(79.9)	(61.7)	194.8	39.0
Margins & Ratio					
Gross Margins (%)	31.4	26.9	25.0	27.0	28.0
Opg Profit Margin (%)	18.4	8.4	4.8	9.2	10.6
Net Profit Margin (%)	14.6	(0.2)	1.6	6.7	8.2
ROAE (%)	28.7	(0.2)	1.1	6.0	7.9
ROA (%)	16.8	(0.2)	0.8	4.1	5.4
ROCE (%)	22.0	3.2	0.7	3.8	5.6
Div Payout Ratio (%)	25.0	-	0.0	25.0	25.0
Net Interest Cover (x)	122.2	7.3	2.9	8.0	14.6

Source: Company, DBS

Interim Income Statement (SGDmn)

FY Dec	1H2022	2H2022	1H2023	2H2023	1H2024
Revenue	540	330	275	206	174
Cost of Goods Sold	(374)	(223)	(192)	(160)	(130)
Gross Profit	166	107	83.0	46.3	43.4
Other Oper. (Exp)/Inc	(63.2)	(50.2)	(57.5)	(31.4)	(39.9)
Operating Profit	103	57.2	25.6	14.9	3.46
Other Non Opg (Exp)/Inc	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Associates & JV Inc	(0.5)	0.18	1.11	(1.8)	(0.3)
Net Interest (Exp)/Inc	(0.6)	(0.8)	(2.8)	(2.7)	(2.1)
Exceptional Gain/(Loss)	0.0	0.0	0.0	(26.7)	0.0
Pre-tax Profit	102	56.7	23.9	(16.3)	1.03
Тах	(19.0)	(12.4)	(4.1)	(4.6)	(0.2)
Minority Interest	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Net Profit	83.1	44.3	19.7	(20.9)	0.82
Net profit bef Except.	83.1	44.3	19.7	5.82	0.82
EBITDA	113	70.2	39.9	27.4	18.4
Growth					
Revenue Gth (%)	44.8	(38.9)	(16.6)	(25.1)	(15.8)
EBITDA Gth (%)	33.5	(38.1)	(43.1)	(31.4)	(32.9)
Opg Profit Gth (%)	36.8	(44.5)	(55.3)	(41.7)	(76.7)
Net Profit Gth (%)	33.1	(46.7)	(55.4)	(205.9)	(103.9)
Margins					
Gross Margins (%)	30.8	32.5	30.2	22.4	25.0
Opg Profit Margins (%)	19.1	17.3	9.3	7.2	2.0
Net Profit Margins (%)	15.4	13.4	7.2	(10.1)	0.5

Balance Sheet (SGDmn)

Balance Sheet (SGDTIII)					
FY Dec	2022A	2023A	2024F	2025F	2026F
Net Fixed Assets	40.1	40.3	33.5	24.0	15.9
Invts in Associates & IVs	15.2	8.82	8.82	8.82	8.82
Other LT Assets	160	168	163	158	152
Cash	128	102	102	214	326
ST Invtestment	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Inventory	368	329	328	238	169
Debtors	92.9	60.1	61.7	77.0	87.1
Net Intangibles Assets	116	125	121	116	110
Other Current Assets	2.15	1.58	1.58	1.58	1.58
Total Assets	806	709	698	721	761
ST Debt	13.7	83.9	83.9	83.9	83.9
Creditor	119	74.8	64.1	60.5	67.5
Other Current Liab	35.6	18.9	13.6	18.4	20.7
LT Debt	130	42.5	42.5	42.5	42.5
Other LT Liabilities	14.3	14.5	14.5	14.5	14.5
Shareholder's Equity	485	467	473	494	525
Minority Interests	8.40	6.93	6.93	6.93	6.93
Total Cap. & Liab.	806	709	698	721	761
	200	207	242	227	4.60
Non-Cash Wkg. Capital	308	297	313	237	169
Net Cash/(Debt)	(15.5)	(24.5)	(24.3)	87.5	200
Debtors Turn (avg days)	46.3	58.0	64.2	58.6	61.2
Creditors Turn (avg days)	95.5	108.4	110.0	80.3	73.9
Inventory Turn (avg days)	182.3	389.5	519.6	364.2	234.8
Asset Turnover (x)	1.1	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.7
Current Ratio (x)	3.5	2.8	3.1	3.3	3.4
Quick Ratio (x)	1.3	0.9	1.0	1.8	2.4
Net Debt/Equity (X)	0.0	0.1	0.1	CASH	CASH
Net Debt/Equity ex MI (X)	0.0	0.1	0.1	CASH	CASH
Capex to Debt (%)	24.9	20.5	14.2	14.2	17.4

Source: Company, DBS

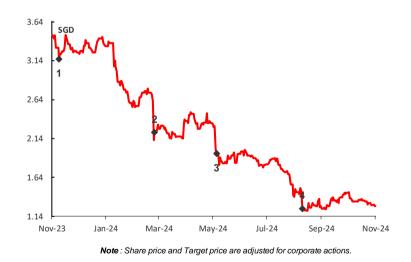


Cash Flow Statement (SGDmn)

FY Dec	2022A	2023A	2024F	2025F	2026F
Pre-Tax Profit	159	7.59	6.49	34.8	48.3
Dep. & Amort.	23.5	25.7	29.4	32.3	36.0
Tax Paid	(21.6)	(28.9)	(6.4)	(1.1)	(5.9)
Assoc. & JV Inc/(loss)	0.28	0.64	0.0	0.0	0.0
Chg in Wkg.Cap.	(198)	31.9	(11.3)	71.0	65.9
Other Operating CF	5.30	3.85	0.0	0.0	0.0
Net Operating CF	(32.1)	40.8	18.3	137	144
Capital Exp.(net)	(35.6)	(25.9)	(18.0)	(18.0)	(22.0)
Other Invts.(net)	(1.6)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Invts in Assoc. & JV	0.0	5.12	0.0	0.0	0.0
Div from Assoc & JV	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other Investing CF	(1.2)	0.55	0.0	0.0	0.0
Net Investing CF	(38.4)	(20.2)	(18.0)	(18.0)	(22.0)
Div Paid	(36.2)	(11.1)	0.0	(7.2)	(10.0)
Chg in Gross Debt	34.7	(16.0)	0.0	0.0	0.0
Capital Issues	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other Financing CF	(17.1)	(20.4)	0.0	0.0	0.0
Net Financing CF	(18.6)	(47.4)	0.0	(7.2)	(10.0)
Currency Adjustments	0.74	0.91	0.0	0.0	0.0
Chg in Cash	(88.4)	(25.9)	0.25	112	112
Opg CFPS (S cts)	53.8	2.88	9.49	21.2	25.2
Free CFPS (S cts)	(21.9)	4.80	0.08	38.2	39.3

Source: Company, DBS

Target Price & Ratings 12-mth History



S.No.	Date of Report	Closing Price	12-mth Target Price	Rating
1:	14 Nov 23	3.16	2.97	HOLD
2:	01 Mar 24	2.22	2.24	HOLD
3:	10 May 24	1.95	1.95	HOLD
4:	15 Aug 24	1.24	1.34	HOLD

Source: DBS Analysts: Amanda Tan Lee Keng LING



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*Share price appreciation + dividends

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