



marten

Duke 2 Loudspeakers - a PF Exclusive!

as reviewed by Robert H. Levi



There's news on the Marten front! I've gotten a chance to spend some time with the Marten Duke 2 monitor loudspeaker—and I have to say that I'm stoked! I want to share my notes with *PFO* readers briefly.

Newly revised, the Duke 2 offers true sophistication combined with added definition and slam, changes bigger than expected by yours truly from the folks at Marten of Sweden. In fact, the completely redesigned two-way speaker is now an ideal monitor design, offering competition to two-ways costing upwards of \$20K!

For \$8.5K, you gain a brand new and excitingly neutral ceramic tweeter; the state of the art midrange driver of the new Coltrane series, used full range; a convenient single hookup; Mundorf components and an all new and simpler crossover.

All ceramic drivers are sourced from top notch Accuton of Germany.



To listen to the Marten Duke, I used a single E.A.R. 534 at 50-watts per channel, and really shook the room. Like all Marten Heritage speakers, the Duke 2 now has one pair of gorgeous silver WBT binding posts for simpler use on the back. The internal wire is Jorma Design, as is the case with all Marten speakers. The review pair was done in black high-gloss lacquer. Many finishes are available. Fit and finish and styling is first class and beautiful, just like the original Dukes.

My reference system included the E.A.R. 834L Preamp, an E.A.R. 534 tube amp, E.A.R. Acute 2 Tube CD Player, the Modwright Sony 999 CD/SACD Player, and the McIntosh MR71 FM Tuner. All interconnecting and speaker cables were Kubala-Sosna Elation! and Emotion, as were the power cords. I used top-grade wire to make sure we had neutral and most revealing performance, regardless of price considerations. I listened to the Duke 2's both with and without the Form subwoofer, and will report on both.

Performance without the Form Sub

No exaggeration folks, the Duke 2 has double the definition and truthfulness of the previous model. WOW! I hear much more detail and power at all frequencies. I lived with the original Dukes for four years in my

second reference system, and I can authoritatively tell you the new Duke 2 is outstanding and much improved. The sense of aliveness and "you-are-there" is enhanced. I hear a new fullness and power that was not there previously. The Dukes still have an neutral perspective. They sound smooth and airy, and never crisp or sharp.

Driver dispersion is even better. Mid-band performance is now state-of-the-art. There, I said it! This is the best two-way design I have heard to date. Low-band definition is very good, with satisfying bass depth and energy. Oodles of definition and power emerge from these small speakers, and the bottom end of orchestra performances are well served. Bass fiddles are solidly heard. Plus the performance on tap is awesome. No silly lump at 50Hz to give you fake bass. In fact I can report that there is not a bit of obvious or imagined lumpiness at any frequency, high or low.

As with most top two ways, the drivers blend seamlessly, and yield lovely background depth. Soundstaging goes way beyond speaker boundaries. I love the natural and truly fleshed out imaging. Superb!

Add the Form Sub

But what happens when you add the basement? With the Marten Form 400 Watt 10-inch subwoofer set at 40Hz and run separately from the Duke 2's, you have about all the speaker system anyone may need in a small-to-medium sized room. The blend is perfect. The enhanced bass imaging and power are awesome. The overall performance of the system is now even more alive, with sparkle, energy, and mellifluousness. The Form is \$4500 and the Duke 2's are \$8500... so \$13K for heavenly audiophile beauty you only imagined at that price. Love it!

Standards are High!

All Marten speakers—and I've heard most every model to date—how the high standards and commitment to quality of their designer Leif Marten and his team. Marten understands the big sound and small nuances of music, especially acoustic music. As I listen to the Duke 2s, all by themselves, they are a wonderful truthful ground-breaking two-way monitor. From their use of cost-no-object drivers, non-parallel surfaces, and second-generation improvements across the board, you just cannot ask for more. I am aware of models for double the cost with less performance!

Conclusion

Marten of Sweden has just released the Duke 2's to their Heritage speaker line; these will premiere in the USA at CES 2013. I am delighted to review the first pair in this country, being an original Duke owner for some years. I am excited to report the Duke 2 is the real deal. It is improved in every way with extensive revisions all serving the beauty of live music. With up to 50% more definition than I heard previously in most sonic ranges of this speaker, I am strongly recommending that you must hear these two-way monitors for yourself. Like Frankenstein's monster, *they are alive!* I consider the originals very fine still, but the Duke 2's are groundbreaking in their newfound lushness, major league detail retrieval, and sense of wondrous reality. Remember that Accuton drivers are used throughout, with the key mid/bass driver borrowed from their \$150k Momento! This is authentic trickle-down magnificence!

It's the best two-way speaker I have heard to date. The brand new Marten Duke 2 is now as good as it gets in this category. **Robert H. Levi**

Duke 2 Loudspeakers
Retail: USD \$8500 a pair

Marten www.Marten.SE

USA Distributor **Dan Meinwald - E.A.R. USA/Sound Advice**
1087 East Ridgewood Street, Long Beach, CA 90807
562.422.4747 (Pacific Time)
info@ear-usa.com www.ear-usa.com