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# Jazz-age wonder

With updated tweeter, internal wiring, crossover and terminals, the Diamond edition Parker Trio is a jewel in Marten's crown

**M**arten Parker Trio is not, oddly enough, the name of some new jazz act. Marten is the Swedish loudspeaker manufacturer, established as a family business by Leif Mårten Olofsson in 1998, and Parker Trio one of its floorstanding options. Yet the jazz angle still applies, as the company's other speaker ranges are Coltrane, Mingus and Oscar. Perhaps Olofsson, who heads up the company as its chief designer, has Monk or Davis in mind for the future...

Launched in May 2020 with as much fanfare as the Covid restrictions

**It requires very little work to arrive at an image with excellent focus and depth**

of the time allowed, the Parker series, with the Trio flanked by a bigger Quintet tower and the smaller Duo standmount, replaced the outgoing Heritage range. It represents the sweet spot in the Marten pecking order, above the entry-level Oscar speakers but below the Mingus and Coltrane families, where pricing reaches six figures. The two-and-a-half-way Trio sells for £19,500 in its basic form, although tested here, for around an extra £10k, is the speaker's Diamond Edition.

Offered for all three Parker models, this upgrade gets its name from a change in the high-frequency driver, Marten replacing the Trio's ceramic dome tweeter with a 'pure diamond' (vapour deposited) unit sourced from German specialist Accuton. The Diamond Edition also boasts higher-quality components in its crossover network, including a switch from polypropylene to copper foil capacitors; uses 'improved' speaker terminals from WBT; and upgrades

the internal cabling – from fellow Swedish company Jorma – to its Statement range.

Outside of these changes (plus 'Diamond Edition' legends on the cabinet), this version looks identical to the standard model. The 25mm tweeter is framed by a semi-circular metal plate and positioned above two 190mm mid/bass drivers. These are ceramic types, custom designed by Olofsson specifically for this model, and backed by neodymium magnets for the promise of a 'very long' linear excursion. Like the tweeter, the mid/bass pair is protected by metal grilles that can't be removed but have been shaped and perforated for optimal dispersion.

The driver closest to the Parker Trio Diamond's tweeter reaches up to meet it at 2.2kHz. The lower unit rolls off earlier, as part of a 'multi-diverse order' crossover network that Marten says was developed "through hours of listening and testing, plus rigorous simulation, calculation and measurement". These two bass units are reflex-loaded via two 230mm rear-facing auxiliary bass radiators (ABRs), also protected by fixed metal grilles, although the cones themselves are an aluminium alloy, not ceramic.

For the Parker Trio Diamond's cabinet, Marten employs a proprietary multilayer fibreboard, a sandwich dubbed 'M-board', in walls that are up to 35mm thick. Internal bracing helps maintain rigidity, while a combination of 70 percent real wool and 30 percent acrylic wool assists with internal damping. More resonance control comes from the loudspeaker's outrigger feet. These feature height-adjustable 'Marten Isolators' developed in collaboration with Canada's IsoAcoustics, said to result in the cabinet being: "completely decoupled from the floor".

With the feet attached, the Parker Trio Diamond stands 1.17m (the

manufacturer's Coltrane Supreme 2 flagship is 2m high) and presents a slender, 22cm-wide face, although the cabinet widens slightly at the rear (to 28cm) to accommodate those two ABRs and help defeat internal standing waves. Completing the non-conventional shape are lean-back angles to the baffle and rear. Overall, the speaker has a refined, classic look, even with the Piano Black finish of our review set accentuating its chromed outriggers and tweeter fixings. Piano White, Piano Walnut or Matt Walnut are other options available, all benefiting from a hand-polishing process at the brand's factory south of Gothenburg.

For setup, the manual sensibly reminds the listener that: "every room is shaped and decorated differently", before recommending at least a 50cm clearance from the rear wall and a listening distance of a minimum of 2.5m. To further aid installation, Marten's supplied CD/USB includes a

## ► DETAILS

**PRODUCT**  
Marten Parker  
Trio Diamond

**ORIGIN**  
Sweden

**TYPE**  
2.5-way ABR-loaded  
floorstanding  
loudspeaker

**WEIGHT**  
40kg

**DIMENSIONS**  
(WxHxD)  
280 x 1,170 x 360mm

**FEATURES**  
• 25mm tweeter  
• 2x 190mm ceramic  
mid/bass drivers  
• Quoted sensitivity:  
91dB/1W/1m (6ohm)

**DISTRIBUTION**  
Nintronics Ltd.

**WEBSITE**  
marten.se  
nintronics.co.uk







15-minute 'burn-in' track to be left on repeat, plus music recorded at its own studio facility.

### Sound quality

Setting up the Parker Trio Diamonds in our listening room requires very little work to arrive at an image with excellent central focus and palpable depth. From that moment on, Marten's speakers get out of the way, delivering a neutral-sounding performance free of any unwanted surprises. Some listeners might

consider this a touch 'unexciting' and crave some additional bloom or romance from the midrange, but the more you listen, the more the Parker Trio Diamond's lack of extravagance becomes a virtue. These are speakers of considerable finesse and can be utterly captivating, but they are very much for those who prefer fine wine to fizzy pop.

With Constellation Audio's Centaur II 500 (HFC 464) amplifier countering the speakers' somewhat power-hungry nature, Anna Fedorova's performance

**The outrigger feet boast 'Marten Isolators' developed in collaboration with Canada's IsoAcoustics**

of Rachmaninoff's *Piano Concerto No.2* comfortably fills the room. The Parker Trio Diamond's resolving abilities produce a crisp, clear sound, with every key press and pedal push easy to discern, while the size and feel of the instrument in the St. Gallen venue shines through. There's a gorgeous weight to low piano notes, frequently delivered with force, alongside the more mellifluous strings of the accompanying orchestra.

ABC's *Viva Love* from the band's *Lexicon Of Love II* set begins with orchestral flourishes before settling into more of a pop-disco vibe. Again, the Parker Trio Diamond's revealing qualities come to the fore, particularly in the upper octaves where the tweeters usher in clear, ringing percussion. A lean but tuneful bassline, allied to rapid-fire drums, guarantees a rhythmic, pacey feel to proceedings. Synth effects are evenly panned between the cabinets, and the Parker Trio Diamonds aren't caught out in any way by the dense mix. A flourish of acoustic guitar at the end cuts through with ease.

Down in the lower octaves, these floorstanders get plenty of mileage from their dual mid/bass drivers and ABR loading. The deep electronic effects of *Junior B* by Yello off *The Eye* LP sound fluid and voluminous

### The more you listen, the more the lack of extravagance becomes a virtue

throughout, with a sense of buoyancy and richness that underpins its otherworldly feel. Bass extension, too, is impressive for a speaker of this size. Elsewhere on the album, the basslines of *Time Palace* are harder edged and chunky, showcasing the Marten Parker Trio Diamond's impressively chameleonic nature.

This calm, open and uniformly finely etched performance works wonders with the first part of Mike Oldfield's *Return To Ommadawn* with its endless flow of instrumental flavours to savour. Once more the Parker Trio Diamonds need a crank of the preamp volume to dig into the riffs and rhythms, but with that achieved the cutting sound of Oldfield's guitar, against a massive background, is absolutely spine tingling. And when the track segues into acoustic guitar, the picked nylon strings ring out with excellent clarity, appearing to come from anywhere but the cabinets themselves.





**HOW IT COMPARES**

Last month we explored alternatives to T+A's £32,500 'line source' S 530 floorstander, one choice example being the very model seen here! In practice, Marten's Diamond Edition Parker Trio lies at the very civilised end of what is a very diverse range of loudspeakers costing ~£30k.

B&W's 801 D4 (HFC 482) is arguably the market leader here, but it takes some driving before delivering a sound that's both vivid and informative. So budget for an amplifier that combines grace with grunt...

Always hot on B&W's heels, KEF has its flagship Blade One Meta. For a speaker that looks like a large blade, its sound is incisive but not 'cutting'. Instead, as KEF's largest 'single apparent source' speaker, it combines the focus, imaging and definition you'd expect of a fine mini monitor, but with the scale to paint across a broad and deep sonic canvas.

Could the Parker Trio Diamond's midrange sound a little more vociferous? That'll come down to personal preference. While lapping up its confident portrayal of The Eagles' *Hotel California*, where the intro's percussion effects are set beyond the edges of the cabinets, we could do with a little more meat on the bone once the rhythm section lands. Similarly, Joe Satriani's *The Journey* impresses with the transient snap to its bassline and the myriad guitar tones on show, but rather misses out on some vim and vigour.

That said, this measured voicing doesn't stop the Parker Trio Diamond from communicating the feel of the music at hand. The Who's *Won't Get Fooled Again* from the band's classic *Who's Next* album enjoys the extra layer of heft these deceptively bass-rich cabinets can muster, giving the power chords added weight. After the middle eight the band locks into a groove

**Utterly captivating, they are very much for those who prefer fine wine to fizzy pop**

with handclaps and funky drumming that, on a good system, is impossible not to wiggle along to. Marten's speakers pass this test with ease and wiggling commences with gusto.

### Conclusion

Marten's mid-tier Parker Trio is not inexpensive in its Diamond Edition guise, but those who can afford to invest will be rewarded with stylish, unobtrusive cabinets and a sound that sparkles, gently, with detail and clarity. There's plenty of bass energy here too, plus a winning way with complex soundstages, big or small. Don't expect sonic 'fireworks' – these floorstanders are too counth for that – and you'll surely be bowled over ●

### THANK YOU FOR THE MUSIC

In the last decade, Marten has spread its wings from making loudspeakers to making music. Or, at least, recording others making music. In an acoustically treated, 70m<sup>2</sup> space at its Gothenburg head office (just up the road from its dedicated manufacturing plant), the company established a studio in 2014 that also functions as a state-of-the-art listening room – Marten describes it as a "cornerstone in the development" of its flagship Coltrane Supreme 2 speaker.

The studio has been used to capture live performances for a series of Supreme Sessions compilations, plus standalone albums from Rhythm Art Duo, Granmo-Berg (inset picture)

and the Matti Ollikainen Trio, for release on the Marten Recordings label. Audiophile quality is, of course, on the agenda. The studio employs just two microphones ("our aim is to produce music as close to reality as possible") and Marten Recordings LPs are pressed on 180g virgin vinyl at Sweden's Spinroad Vinyl facility. Hi-res downloads (24-bit/96kHz) are also available from: [martenshop.com](http://martenshop.com) and three tracks recorded in the studio are included on the demo CD (and USB) supplied with all its speakers as standard.



## Hi-FiChoice

### OUR VERDICT

#### SOUND QUALITY



**LIKE:** Stylish design, sparkling sound

#### VALUE FOR MONEY



**DISLIKE:** Arguably a little too counth!

#### BUILD QUALITY



**WE SAY:** A smart buy if you've got the reddies

#### EASE OF DRIVE



### OVERALL

