

Marten Parker Trio Diamond

With uprated tweeter, internal wiring, crossover and terminals, the Diamond edition Parker Trio is a jewel in Marten's crown
 Review: **Mark Craven** Lab: **Paul Miller**

Marten Parker Trio is not, of course, the name of a 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 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.

KARAT CLAD

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 [see *HFN* Mar '25]. 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 bass/mid 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 bass/mids are protected by metal grilles that can't be removed but have been shaped and perforated for optimal dispersion.

GRILLED GOODNESS

The driver closest to the Parker Trio Diamond's tweeter reaches up to meet it at 2.2kHz.

The lower unit rolls off earlier [see PM's Lab Report, p55], 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% real wool and 30% 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, ➔

RIGHT: Hosting a diamond-coated 25mm tweeter and two Accuton-sourced 190mm ceramic-coned units (bass and bass/mid), the Parker Trio's cabinet is rhomboidal in shape with baffle and rear panels leaning backwards



'The height-adjustable
"Marten Isolators"
were developed with
Canada's IsoAcoustics'



MAKING 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, 70m² 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. High-res downloads (96kHz/24-bit) are also available from www.martenshop.com, and three tracks recorded in the studio are included on the demo CD (and USB) supplied with all its speakers.



classic look, even with the Piano Black 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 aid installation, Marten’s supplied CD/USB includes a 15-minute ‘burn-in’ track to be left on repeat, plus music recorded at its own studio facility [see boxout, above].

GRAPE EXPECTATIONS

Setting up the Parker Trio Diamonds in the *HFN* listening room [see p39] required very little work to arrive at an image with excellent central focus and palpable depth. From that moment on, Marten’s speakers got out of the way, delivering a neutral-sounding performance free of unwanted surprises. Some listeners might consider this ‘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 for those who prefer fine wine to fizzy pop.

With Constellation Audio’s Centaur II 500 amplifier [*HFN* Dec ’19] countering the speakers’ somewhat power-hungry nature, Anna Fedorova’s performance of Rachmaninoff’s Piano Concerto No 2

[Channel Classics CCS 42522] filled the room. The Parker Trio Diamond’s resolving abilities produced a crisp, clear sound, with every key press and pedal push easy to discern and the size and feel of the instrument in the St. Gallen venue shining through. There was a gorgeous weight to low piano notes, frequently delivered with force, alongside the more mellifluous strings of the accompanying orchestra.

RAPID RESPONSE

ABC’s ‘Viva Love’, from the band’s *Lexicon Of Love II* set [Virgin EMI CDV 3150], begins with orchestral flourishes before settling into a pop-disco vibe. Again, the Parker Trio Diamond’s revealing qualities came to the fore, particularly in the upper octaves where the tweeters ushered in clear, ringing percussion. A lean but tuneful bassline, allied to rapid-fire drums, guaranteed a rhythmic, pacey feel to proceedings. Synth effects were evenly panned between the speakers, and the Parker Trio Diamonds weren’t caught out by the dense mix. A flourish of acoustic guitar at the end cut through with ease.

In the low octaves, these floorstanders get plenty of mileage from their dual bass/mid drivers and ABR loading. The deep electronic effects of ‘Junior B’ by Yello [*The Eye*; Motor, 96kHz/24-bit] sounded fluid and voluminous, with a buoyancy and richness that underpinned its otherworldly feel. Bass extension, ➞

RIGHT: The 26-35mm-thick ‘M-board’ cabinet is offered in Piano/Matt Walnut and Piano Black/White finishes. Chromed outriggers are fitted with IsoAcoustics’ ‘Isolator’ feet

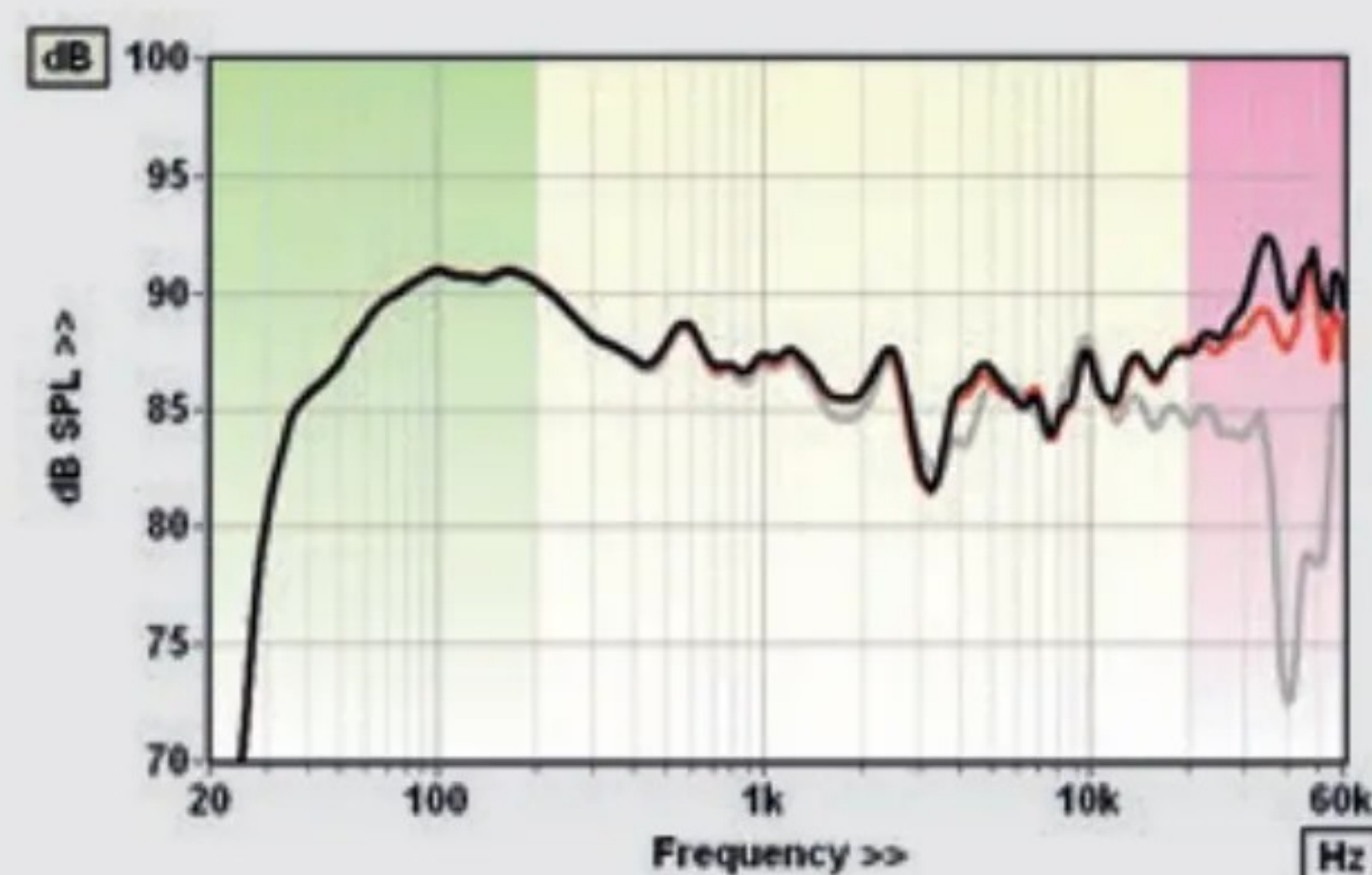


MARTEN PARKER TRIO DIAMOND

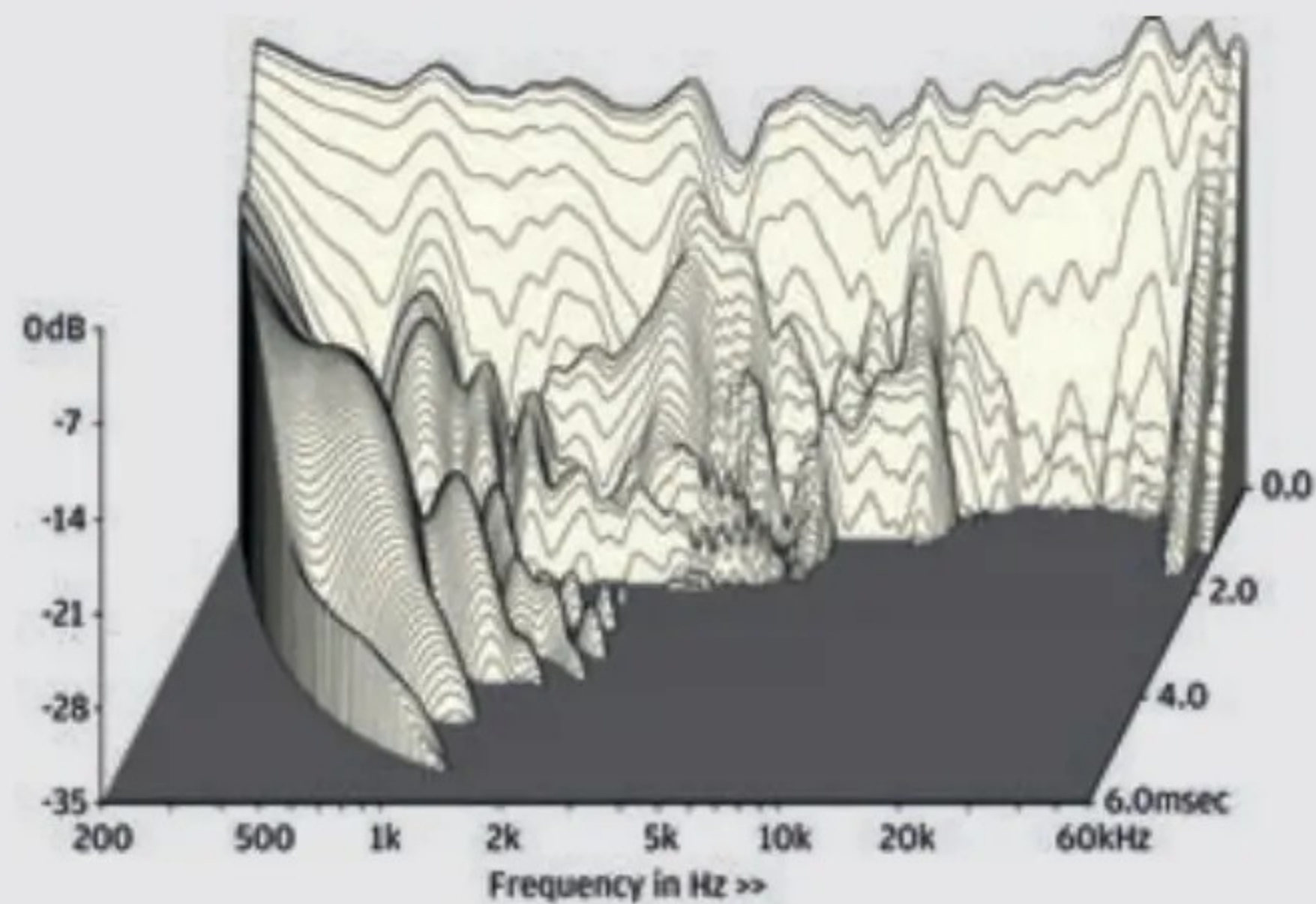
A typical seated height will likely place the listener on the axis of the 25mm 'Diamond' tweeter where the Parker Trio shows a gently dished 'BBC-esque' forward response, with a fulsome bass but milder mid/presence [see Graph 1]. The tweeter is wired in reverse-phase to aid integration with the adjacent 190mm ceramic bass/mid driver, the latter operating over an extended 43Hz-1.7kHz (-6dB) bandwidth. The lower 'true woofer' occupies 43Hz-450Hz (-6dB re. 100Hz) while the rear-firing, alloy ABRs are tuned to 32Hz, the ensemble delivering a very respectable diffraction-corrected bass extension of 35Hz (-6dB re. 200Hz).

A peak in response at the 2.2kHz crossover followed by a ~6dB dip at 3.3kHz largely accounts for the ±4.6dB response errors (200Hz-20kHz) and correlates with mild driver modes visible on the CSD waterfall [see Graph 2]. Our speakers were tightly matched – within 0.4dB (200Hz-20kHz) – deviating only above 20kHz [red/black traces, Graph 1]. The Diamond tweeter has a very extended 73kHz range (-6dB re. 10kHz) but there are modes at 35kHz, 48kHz and 58kHz just as likely caused by an interaction with the metal grille. Toeing the speakers away from the listening axis by just ±15° delivers a flatter top-end response that dips quite sharply above 33kHz [grey trace, Graph 1].

Marten's 91dB sensitivity rating is too optimistic – 87.3dB/1kHz and 86.1dB/500Hz-8kHz are achieved in practice, while the 3.3ohm/159Hz minimum impedance suggests a nominal 4ohm rather than 6ohm. The biggest swings in impedance phase occur below 100Hz and at the HF crossover, leading to two quite tough EPDRs of 1.54ohm/85Hz and 1.49ohm/2.15kHz. PM



ABOVE: Response inc. nearfield summed drivers/ABRs [green], freefield corrected to 1m at 2.83V [yellow], ultrasonic [pink]. Left, black; right, red; ±15°, grey



ABOVE: Mild (alloy) driver modes at 600Hz and at 2-3kHz crossover but diamond tweeter is very clean

HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Sensitivity (SPL/1m/2.83V – 1kHz/Mean/IEC)	87.3dB / 86.1dB / 84.9dB
Impedance modulus: minimum & maximum (20Hz–20kHz)	3.29ohm @ 159Hz 23.6ohm @ 55Hz
Impedance phase: minimum & maximum (20Hz–20kHz)	-53° @ 66.5Hz +45° @ 45Hz
Pair matching/Resp. error (200Hz–20kHz)	0.44dB/ ±4.6dB/±4.6dB
LF/HF extension (-6dB ref 200Hz/10kHz)	35Hz / 72.7kHz/73.0kHz
THD 100Hz/1kHz/10kHz (for 90dB SPL/1m)	0.15% / 0.08% / 0.4%
Dimensions (HWD, mm) / Weight	1170x220-280x360/40kg

LEFT: WBT 'nextgen' terminals are better suited to 4mm plugs than heavyweight spades/cables. Bass is reinforced by two rear-firing 230mm aluminium alloy-coned ABRs

guitar, the picked nylon strings rang out with excellent clarity, appearing to come from anywhere but the loudspeakers themselves.

SNAP 'N' WIGGLE

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' [Rhino Records; 192kHz/24-bit], where the intro's percussion effects were set beyond the edges of the cabinets, I wouldn't have minded more meat on the bone once the rhythm section landed. Similarly, Joe Satriani's 'The Journey' [Strange Beautiful Music; EPC 508076 2] impressed with the transient snap to its bass line, and the myriad guitar tones on show, but missed out on some vim and vigour.

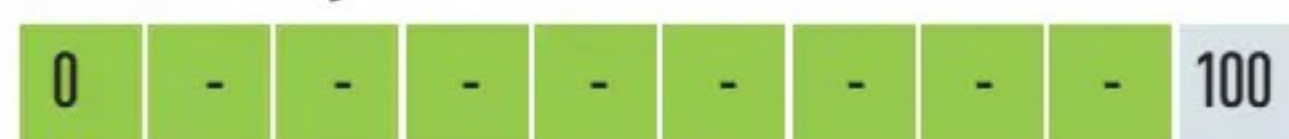
That said, this measured voicing doesn't stop the Parker Trio Diamond from communicating the feel of the music at hand. The Who's 'Won't Get Fooled Again' [Who's Next; Universal Music, 96kHz/24-bit] enjoyed the extra layer of heft these deceptively bass-rich cabinets can muster, giving the power chords added weight.

After the middle eight the band locks into a groove with handclaps and funky drumming that, on a good system, is impossible not to start wiggling along too. Marten's speakers passed this test with ease. ☺

HI-FI NEWS VERDICT

Marten's mid-tier Parker Trio is not inexpensive in its Diamond Edition guise, but those who invest will get 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 couth for that – and you'll surely be bowled over.

Sound Quality: 87%



too, was impressive for a speaker of this size. Elsewhere on the album, the bass lines of 'Time Palace' were harder-edged and chunky, showcasing the Marten Parker Trio Diamond's chameleonic nature.

This calm, open, and uniformly finely etched performance worked wonders with the first part of Mike Oldfield's *Return To Ommadawn* [Virgin EMI, 96kHz/24-bit], with its endless flow of instrumental flavours to savour. Once more the Parker Trio Diamonds needed 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, was spine-tingling. And when the track segued into acoustic