



Marten Oscar Duo Speakers Review



Its always harder the first time

The first time reviewing a product from a manufacturer is always the hardest because you are not quite sure your thoughts and opinion are correct and sometimes HiFi products make you second guess yourself, especially speakers as they are the arbiter of everything in the system chain before them. The Marten Oscar Duo stand mount speakers are exactly that product for me, because they smashed my expectations of what a speaker of this type can do but at the same time I didn't feel like I had them setup to their absolute best. I didn't know this for sure, but in the back of my mind I had some underlying doubts that something wasn't quite clicking with my HiFi Review system but I couldn't say at the time what it was. Fortunately I also had one of Marten's other new HiFi speakers to review, the Parker Duo and I am so glad that I did.

Who are Marten

Marten Audio were formed in 1998 and they are based in Gothenburg, Sweden. Hugely interestingly I think in 2014 they opened a recording studio in where they design their speakers, that must give them a certain advantage when it comes to knowing how things should sound. They

are also a very high end speaker manufacturer, by high end their Coltrane Supreme 2 model costs around \$480,000 give or take exchange rates, lets let that sink in for a minute.

The Oscar range of speakers of which there are two models the Duo a two way stand mount and the Trio a two way floor standing speaker and these were released in 2020. The Oscar speakers are designed to give customers the Marten sound but at a more competitive price. The Oscar Duo is Martens most affordable loudspeaker to date but its still a considerable chunk of change for HiFi speakers or is it?



Nice looking speakers

The Oscar Duo are a very nice looking speaker from every angle, simple elegance springs to mind and they have a very high quality finish, some nice touches you can see like the silver accents and the WBT speaker cable binding posts. On the inside there are nice touches also such as copper foil air core coils, silver/ gold capacitors, supreme resistors and Jorma cabling, Jorma is Marten sister company that makes very high end HiFi cabling solutions I reviewed their entry levels cables last year and they are very good.

The Oscar Duo driver array features a 7 inch ceramic mid bass driver and a 1 inch ceramic tweeter both of those drivers are interesting to look at, I like the way light reflects off of them, there is something clean and intriguing and modern about how they look.

I am using the Oscar Duo with Marten dedicated stands for them which are an additional premium and the speakers bolt to the stands for that extra bit of security. Apart from the slightly angled baffle and the very nice curves there is nothing that grabs you and makes you think this speaker will break any moulds, but what about the rated frequency response of 37hz to 20khz. 37hz for a speaker this size and you might think well its just the manufacturer spec sheet its meaningless but you soon find out its not.

Setup and Measurements

Setting them up was easy to a point, they are not heavy speakers, even bolted to the stands and it didn't take me long to find a good starting point for toe in and distance from me for good time



alignment to create a nice solid centre image and a good amount of sound stage focus. I ended up with a fairly reasonable amount of toe in, probably more than some other audiophiles would use, but I am into the direct sound at the moment and feel this is the best way to setup most speakers.

When I measured the speakers in my room their frequency response is very interesting, above where the room dominates you can see the Oscar Duo have a very nice and smooth overall response in the main with a couple of interesting features. Firstly the very commonly seen dip around 2.5khz or the presence region and then the next interesting thing is a slight rise in the treble, but overall again it's a nice and smooth in room response.



I did find the Oscar Duo a little tricky to get totally dialled in from a Dirac Live Calibration point of view, the mid range and treble was easy enough but the bass took me quite a bit of time to find a happy place and I want to start talking about sound quality right there with the bass.



Very Surprising Bass

The amount of bass the Oscar Duo created in my room was laws of physics defying, it like listening to floor standing speakers, obviously not big ones but still that amount of bass. This is really surprising about them and interesting for two reasons, firstly Marten say that the Oscar Duo crossover is designed to maximise dynamics and bass is we all know is a big part of that and boy these speakers really deliver dynamics for bass. Regulars to my YouTube channel will know I appreciate a lot of bass and normally with smaller stand mount speakers I am trying to squeeze as much bass out of them as possible but with the Oscar Duo I was toning them down in the Dirac Calibration to try and get the bass as tight as possible. I think they would have liked more space around them than I was giving them and I also now feel this is because of the amplifier.

They have just got a very full and full bodied sound and easily do room filling bass like you would expect from much bigger speakers. I think the only other stand mount speaker to give me this amount of bass output was the Monitor Audio Platinum PL100 MK2 but I don't remember them being anything like the Oscar Duo in terms of producing bass grandiose presence and scale. Some of this was amplifier dependent, using the Gryphon Diablo 120 gave me a much grander scale of sound from the Oscar Duo than when I used the Arcam SA30 and there is huge difference in price between those amplifiers and the Oscar Duo made me aware of it and took advantage of it. In saying this I am not 100% sure the Gryphon Diablo 120 was the ideal amplifier for the Oscar Duo in terms of bass. Later I tried the Leema Acoustics Tucana II Anniversary and it has a lighter but tighter bass than the Gryphon which is a better match for the Oscar and Parker Duo in my room.

Impressive Sound Stage

The next thing that impressed me with them is their soundstage creation and their imaging, they have the ability to fill the room with sound but its organised and with precise stereo imaging. Back to that dip in the frequency response in the presence region, I think that helps the speaker hold back its mid range and vocal delivery which meant in my room there was a nice ark of sound created, music depending of course, but with the main event vocal held back from you in the middle of the sound stage creates a nice amount of space and openness.

The Oscar Duo deliver music with a nice combination of a you go to the music at times and then other times the music comes out to you and that makes me think back to what Marten say these speakers are designed to do dynamic range well because they really can transition from quiet to loud or from front to back left to right etc, all very impressive.

The treble in the main is smooth and even and I think for a lot of audiophiles it will be nicely balanced, I found the treble to be a little laid back for my tastes and I find this with a lot of speakers and I think it is because my room is very acoustically treated. I would guess that the majority of customers who buy these speakers wont be listening in a room like mine, in fact modern living is very much the opposite so a lot of owners will probably appreciate the treble delivery more than me because it will balance better for them in their room. In saying that if you like speakers with a really crisp or lively treble these skills might not be for you but its always best to try first. I think Marten are more focused on a fullness, richness, tonality and smoothness with the Oscar Duo I am sure they would say they have an organic sound as a result.

You can hear in this in the vocal and mid range delivery of the Oscar Duo, male and female vocals have soul and generally sound big and expressive and again dynamic if the system is good enough let to them do it.



An Unfair BUT, that I couldn't figure out

For me in my room the Oscar Duo was delivering a big bass sound with a very smooth and mostly laid back mid range and the same with the treble but they were shifting their dynamics up and then back down nicely as the music demanded.

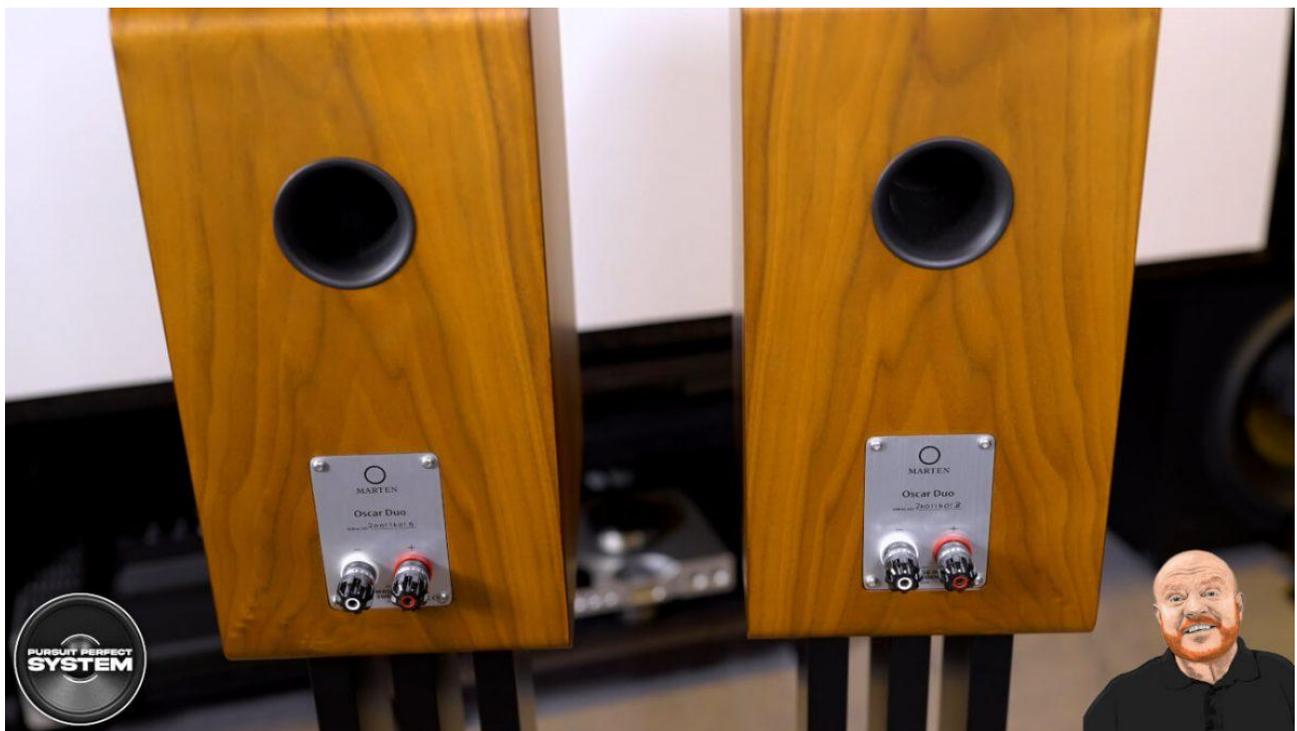
Overall it's a very impressive speaker for how it does this from a very compact size speaker, its hard at times to believe they produce this much big transparent free of the speaker sound, but there is a but, it's a tiny little but that I feel overly harsh for even mentioning. I would have loved to have a dial that I could turn just to tighten the sound up just a little bit, a tiny bit in the vocal and little more in the highs and maybe a full notch for the bass.

Then I have to think about recently Marten added Isolators to some of their range of speakers working in conjunction with IsoAcoustics to produce them. Maybe adding some Marten / IsoAcoustics isolators to the stands of the Oscar Duo could well be that tightening dial I am referring to, I think there is something in that to consider if you are interested in these speakers.

I also now feel the amplifier is very important for getting the most from these speakers, this is obvious and is always the case.

Price

The Marten Parker Duo cost £4950 so yeah a chunk of money for stand mount hifi speakers but not crazy at all for what they can give you and priced tightly against the main competitors such as the Bowers 805 £4750, Focal Sopra No.1 £6,499



Final Thoughts

I do think some audiophiles will have a hard time comprehending spending this much money on stand mount speakers when you can have good floor standing speakers for less. However flip that notion on its head for a second and think you can have a floor stander like sound and performance

from a speaker your wife wont divorce you for buying and that wont dominate the room and that will be music to a lot of other audiophiles ears no pun intended.



An Essential Audition Award is granted in recognition of a products high performance but with a certain uniqueness that makes auditioning even more essential.

I feel like with the Oscar Duo Marten have almost made a party speaker, a speaker that is fun to listen to because its got real guts and gusto to its sound in the bass, but they have also got a lovely amount of quality, real quality to their presentation, so its not a party speaker, its very much an audiophiles speaker, but one that breaks some moulds I feel for what it does for its size.

That is where things get very interesting for me because next I am going to be looking at another new speaker from Marten the Parker Duo, this is a larger stand mount further up in their range and I really excited to see what moulds the Parker is going to break.

For the full Specification of the Marten Oscar Duo

See the website <https://www.marten.se/products/oscar/oscar-duo/>