



Marten Oscar Trio Loudspeakers Review



Piero Gabucci July 22 July, 2020 | Floor Standing Speakers



Recently, VANA Ltd. of Lake Grove NY became the North American distributor of Swedish speaker maker Marten, a premium brand that in my opinion has been a bit elusive in North America.

So, I applaud the news! With the new arrangement, Marten has introduced a new “affordable” series called Oscar. The new line is comprised of two versions, the monitor Duo, and the floor-standing Trio.

Anyone familiar with Marten will know their Coltrane Series that can set you back six figures or said differently, halfway to a million dollars. Although they have other reachable ownership speakers, the Oscar Series which bridges the affordable line with the highest-end may effectively put them on the map. Here for review, at just under \$11,000 for the pair, is the Oscar Trio floor-standing speaker.

Introduction

Brief history, Marten is a family business owned and run by the Olofsson brothers. Founded in Sweden by Leif Mårten Olofsson in 1998, the company now includes Jörgen and Lars, who handle

everything from design to engineering.

Learning from their grandfather who made violins fashioned after Stradivarius, the passion for music and its reproduction became the philosophy. Their lofty goal is probably no different from any other speaker designer; to make music sound live. Marten calls it "Truth in Music".

Marten Oscar Trio Specifications



Drivers:
Single 1" Ceramic Tweeter and Dual
7" Ceramic Woofers
Frequency range:
27-20000 Hz +-3dB
Power rating:
250 W
Sensitivity:
89 dB / 1 m / 2.83V
Impedance:
6 Ohm (3.1 Ohm min)
Type:
2-way
Crossover frequency:
Second order 2500 Hz
Terminals:
Single-wiring WBT Nextgen

Internal wiring:
Jorma Design
Cabinet:
25 mm fiber laminate Matte Walnut,
Piano Black or White
Stands:
Brushed aluminum with Marten Pucks
and Cones
Dimensions W x H x D:
20 x 109 x 40 cm (11.4 x 42.9 x 15.7 ")
Net weight:
30 Kg (67 lbs)
MSRP:
\$10,995/pair
MANUFACTURER'S WEBSITE:
<https://www.marten.se/>
Company: Marten

Design



How do you go about making a premium speaker? Considering the pedigree at Marten as well as the potential for trickle-down opportunities, Marten ultimately decided that the Oscar Series would be designed from the "ground-up" with new technology. The first thing you notice is the simple design of the Trio, in a Swedish-modern kind of way. The corners are clean, square-edged except for the curved top radius that enhances the tilted face of the cabinet. The matte walnut wood veneer is classic although the Trio is also available in traditional piano black and white. The cabinet is laminated 25 mm thick, about 1 inch.

The Trio sits on outriggers that stand off the floor with cones and pucks. They first

appear to set the speaker quite high, but the system works both to isolate the speakers and to give more air for the bottom bass port.





On the rear near the floor, a single set of high-quality WBT Nextgen binding posts.



For the bespoke drivers, Marten has worked closely with SB Acoustics to develop drivers featuring ceramic cone construction. Ceramic is best known as a stiff, lightweight material, and rigid enough to produce clarity and keep distortion to a minimum.

The Marten Oscar Trio is a 2-way design with a 1" tweeter complemented by a pair of 7" woofer drivers. When I asked for more information on the custom drivers, I was fortunate enough to get Leif's response:

The custom-made bass/mid driver:

Vented cast aluminum basket and vented pole piece for low compression.

Reinforced ceramic membrane for "piston" behavior and no breakup in its frequency area. Copper sleeve pole piece for lower distortion.

The custom-made tweeter:

Extremely rigid ceramic dome for a high break up mode with phase optimized design for flat and even high-frequency response. Powerful neodymium magnet system with a copper cap for high efficiency and minimum phase shift. Optimized vented pole piece for perfect coupling to rear chamber.

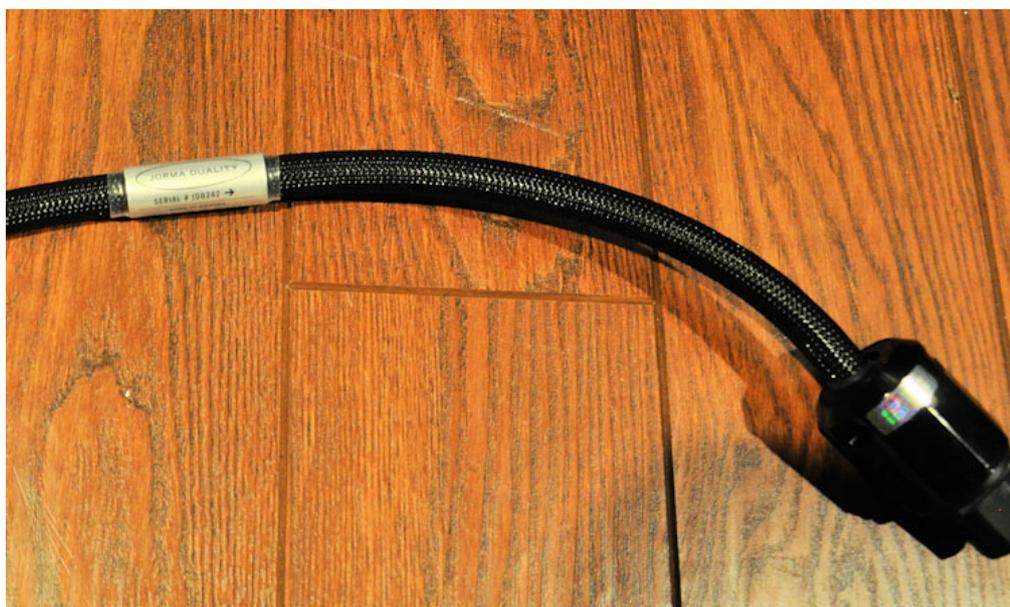


And on the crossover concept, the response:

We use different crossover principles depending on what drivers we use. For this series, it works better with a 2nd order design since the drivers are not optimized for a 1st order crossover. The Mingus and Coltrane series have drivers specially made to handle flat 6dB slopes. We can get excellent results with both principles but of course, the 1st order technique with optimized drivers is more complicated and exclusive and for a totally different price level.

Marten also slopes the front baffle to vertically align the acoustic centers of the drivers. This alignment is also accomplished in the design of the SB Acoustics drivers.

<https://www.marten.se/technology/>



Internally the Oscar is wired with high-quality copper wiring from Jorma Design. In fact, Marten is so particular about the Jorma internal wiring that they encouraged me to wire my system with a full complement of Jorma Design cables, more on that later.

Setup

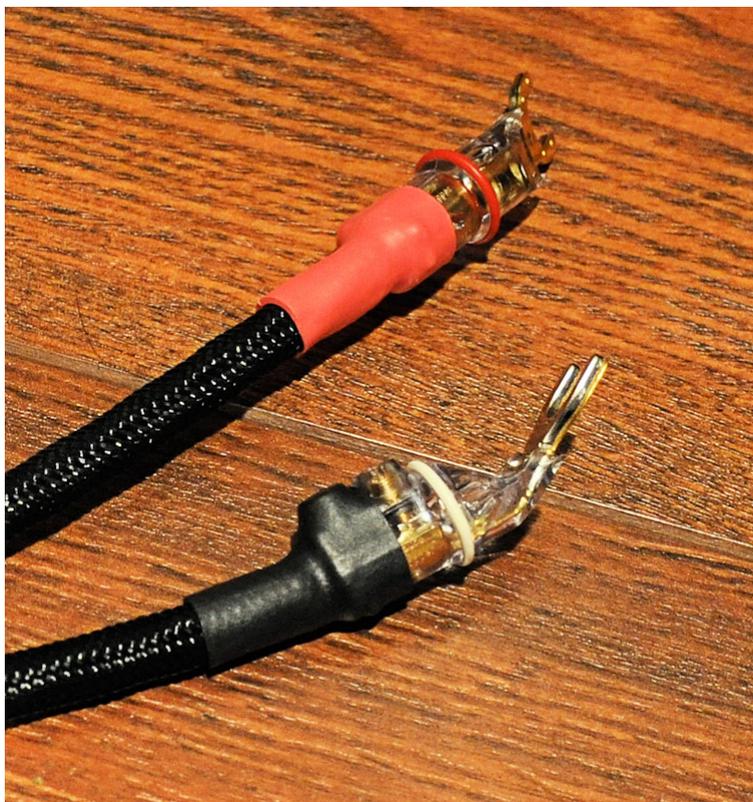
I was extremely fortunate to have not one but two dedicated people from VANA LTD deliver the Trio pair; Roy Feldstein, the Managing Partner and CTO along with Anthony Chiarella, the National Sales Manager, helped position the speakers. I can say it didn't take much to dial them into my room and they never moved from the spot we set — about nine feet apart, slightly toed-in with my chair about ten feet back, slightly stretching the equilateral triangle.

I may have during playback considered pushing the Trio back a few inches for a bit more punch to the bass. I was perfectly happy with the fullness and depth in general, but if someone were to make this investment, long term they may play with placement a bit more.

The tweeter is positioned about 40" off the floor while my ears sit about 34" in my listening chair. Ever so slight at this distance back, I found zero off-axis loss of detail. I can say for certain, many speakers I audition suffer from this vertical difference. Not so with the Marten pair, I was delighted by the air and detail from the Oscar Trio's tweeter that I craved music that articulated richly in the high range.

Considering the Marten Trio has a sensitivity of 89 dB / 1 m / 2.83V, I am happy to report my Parasound JC5 boasting 400 watts into 8 Ω RMS, delivered convincingly the ability of the Martens to breath and sing. The Parasound Halo P6 preamplifier quarterbacked the system that included a NAD C658 Music Streamer/DAC playing digital files from TIDAL. In my system is an Oppo UDP-205 player for CDs and a Marantz TT-15 S1 turntable for vinyl through a Parasound JC 3 Jr phono preamplifier.

My system is almost exclusively wired with Transparent Audio cables, speaker cable, interconnects, and power cables, but because Marten goes to great lengths to include Jorma Design wiring internally in all their speakers, I heartily accepted the offer to totally wire up my system with Jorma cables. Included were interconnects both XLR and unbalanced, speaker cables, and power cords.



The cables physically are surprisingly minimal and thin, especially the speaker cables. This is not the case typically with high-end cables that robust, especially power cords.

It would be unfair for me to spend oodles of time swapping my reference cables with the Jorma Design cables in evaluating the Marten Oscar Trio, I would almost prefer to do that with my system. But I will say the Marten/Jorma combination was transparent and detailed.

As this is not a cable review, I would certainly suggest doing some reading, a worthy investigation. For more information:

<https://jormadesign.com>

In Use

I recently discovered some lovely guitar work from Norwegian Rolf Lidlevand entitled La Mascarade, Music for Solo Baroque Guitar, and Theorbo/2016 (MQA) on TIDAL. I am immediately struck by the clean texture of the plucked strings. His finger drags resonate through the Marten Trio. The natural tonality of the guitar is rich and articulate. My guitar-playing envy gives way to the enjoyment of these tracks, and any fan of the classical guitar will find this a superbly rendered album on the Oscar Trio.

Listening to light tracks from Beethoven Around the World: Vienna String Quartet/2019 (MQA) performed by Quatuor Ebene playing the 7th and 8th string quartet, I found the strings are palpably rich. The violin playing is light and a sweet complement to the deeper, heavier cello.

Getting back to more contemporary music, (well at least from this century), a favorite album from Bob Dylan, Oh Mercy/1989 (CD). Several tracks stand out on the Marten, but I absolutely love “Man in the Long Black Coat”, a track beautifully arranged and engineered. Instruments float off the speakers, each richer than the next and the Marten Trio renders the entire track spatially, deep, and wide. Dylan’s voice is raspy as usual yet articulate and throaty sounding. The Marten Oscar offers the music both delicately and with true force.

I am impressed that at all volumes, the Marten Trio seems to deliver the dynamics. At low levels, many speakers struggle with a solid soundstage, whereas at higher volumes the music begins to be etched. Not so with the Marten: the spatiality of the music, along with the micro-dynamics are not lost.

Melody Gardot’s 2009 eclectic album My One And Only Thrill, sounds just superb on the Marten Oscar Trio. Her soulful voice is both subtle and mature, coming from a very young singer. This is a perfect album to keep at low volumes on a Sunday morning while writing. Any harsh sibilance from her voice is non-existent. The Trio effortlessly renders her voice, with all the character she possesses.



Switching gears, the beautiful melodic voice of Johnny Hartman has such depth and control via the Marten, that I pulled out every album I had both vinyl and digital. What the Marten does for a female voice, delicate and sweet, is rich and hearty with a man’s voice. Hartman is known for his deep baritone voice, but the Marten Oscar just seems to give his voice that additional texture. I’m just blown away by the sense of “realism”.

One final track after listening to Johnny Hartman, Willie Nelson’s duet with his daughter Paula Nelson on his 2013 album To All The Girls..., with the re-make of CCR’s “Have you Ever Seen The Rain”. Beautifully arranged, the track has a great pace and their combined voices are both so articulate that the Marten Trio nails the track with space between them, and yet it seems they are taking turns at the microphone.

Could I find fault with the Trio? I would be reaching to be critical, I really have nothing to feel worthy enough to criticize.

Conclusions



This is a tough one as there are many great speakers at this price point. The MARTEN OSCAR TRIO is a beautiful speaker with impeccable veneering, expertly made drivers, and tried and true engineering.

This alone makes the Trio a great value but there is more. The sound of the Marten Oscar Trio is elite, what's the "value" in that evaluation?

Slogans abound in the audio industry, so what is the Marten Sound: Low distortion, dynamic, and uncolored reproduction. It is not hard to understand that all speaker designers want to achieve exactly those goals. Setting out to do it and actually accomplishing the goals are two different things. Give Leif and the Olofsson family credit for achieving a high standard in their "trickle-down" line.

As a reviewer, I always ask myself the same question as I end my time with speakers; could I live with this speaker if it were my last and my answer with the Marten Oscar Trio; wholeheartedly yes! Highly recommended.