

Revel Concerta 2 M16 Loudspeakers

By Dan Worth

The £950 Revel Concerta2 M16 standmount loudspeakers are the latest in a very long line of designs from the renowned American brand – part of Harman’s Luxury Audio stable, which includes Mark Levinson, Lexicon and JBL’s flagship Synthesis and ‘Project’ speakers. Dan Worth takes a listen for Hifi Pig

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Having a sleek, curved appearance in high-gloss black and white finishes with no visible fixings, the M16s would be a great fit in any modern home. The M16's system comprising a 1" aluminium tweeter mounted in an Acoustic Lens Waveguide and a 6.5" aluminium/ceramic (Micro-Ceramic Composite) mid/bass driver is built for any small to medium listening space, having a compact cabinet measuring 37 x 22 x 27cm (H x W x D). With a sensitivity of 86db and a 6ohm impedance, the M16 will represent a comfortable load for amplifiers 50-120wpc.

My review samples arrived in the very attractive gloss white finish. The curved design sweeps backwards from the glossy baffle, which is adorned with a finely sculpted tweeter waveguide situated above a neatly engineered mid/bass driver and surround. Both drivers are fixed from the inside and the grilles are attached magnetically to maintain the elegant styling.

At 2.1 kHz the crossover frequency is a little lower than you'd normally expect from a 2-way standmount. I suspect this is down to the waveguide providing a better match with the directivity of the mid/bass driver, blending the sound for a one-source effect – a little like the technique employed by Amphion speakers, if I remember correctly.

The Sound

In my listening space the first impression was of surprisingly extended bass, far belying the cabinet size. After further listening though I found it difficult to really hear the rest of the spectrum properly. Mounted on my trusted Monitor Audio Platinum stands, which are an ideal size for the M16s, the new Concerta design sounded, well, muddy. I'd heard how Revel goes to extraordinary lengths in optimising every aspect of its designs, meticulously evolving the sound on and off-axis using the most scientific test bench analysis backed-up by double-blind listening experiments on a giant mechanical

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turntable, purpose built at Revel's development facility to fix the speakers in exactly the same position for every audition. Somehow the sound I was hearing didn't square with the science. Further investigation had me perplexed: the cabinets seemed to be resonating, when, according to everything I'd read about the curved, fibre-board reinforced cabinet walls and strategic bracing, would suggest a highly rigid construction. In desperation I reached for my Soundcare Superspikes in order to decouple the speakers from the stands. The effect was profound, as if an entirely different loudspeaker had muscled its way into the room. Presumably this is why Revel has built a dedicated stand (at around £250 a pair) for the M16, and why all good audiophiles should pay particular respect to the importance of isolation!

Once decoupled, the M16's cabinet and tuned rear port began to function in sync. All interactions between driver, cabinet and port now produced a sound which was smooth, detailed and

extremely well chiseled. In my time I have come across very few speakers that display such a stark contrast in performance pre and post spikes, so be warned: I suspect the M16 will sound as good on most stands, provided the two are de-coupled.

When they're allowed to work, the M16 signature is smooth, treble extremes are well extended and fatigue-free, which makes for incredibly long listening sessions, even at high volumes. Bass performance is a treat, layering the upper bass with a smoother more integrated and extended lower bassline that seduces the listener. Simply sink into your seat and relax in the ambience flooding around you.

Sound staging is really rather good. The integration of on axis accuracy and a well-controlled off-axis response produces an audio image far bigger than you'd expect: wide enough to reproduce live performances in large venues as well as intimate studio recordings. A true reflection of image height is a great



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attribute of the M16. During many listening tests I could 'see' the artist performing, and unpick individual instruments from complex passages - even poorly recorded ones. The M16's phase accuracy and timing offered great insight and revealed just how much a precision-tuned system can contribute to the enjoyment of all the music I tried. This coherence coupled with the smooth sound of the M16 makes for a communicative listen, conveying depth and strong layering abilities.

I spent many evenings listening to the seductive M16s. I often find that a darkened listening space enhances the realism of venue acoustics and transients. So a speaker with the M16's qualities is perfect for these occasions. Listening to the Concerta2 M16s is a journey of exploration: the more you listen, the more you discover. I put many hours on this pair, and the rewards are significant over time.

Many Loudspeakers at the £1000 price point are designed to be dynamically exciting and fast paced. With the Revels, the journey is more subtle; their copious wealth in tonal performance and cohesiveness arrives slowly and surely. Female vocals are given excellent expression without any hint of upper midrange forwardness, grain or hardness. The lower mid frequencies of male vocals are so well rendered, providing a sense of authenticity that simply draws you in.

I'd assumed that the Revel's smooth character would mask the dynamics of pop and dance music, but I was in for a surprise. True, the upper bass seemed less punchy than that of other speakers of a similar pedigree, but replacing a pronounced upper bass was a 'weight' to the music, which was fantastically dynamic, robust and very well layered into the lowest bass frequencies. Once again the effect was non-fatiguing: there was less wham-bam impact but nevertheless the overall result was incredibly engrossing and surprisingly addictive.

The characteristics of the M16s can be tailored very easily. Isolation from the stand is an absolute must and afterwards a little trial and error will find a sweet spot for the room and listener. Trying out different classes of amplification will tailor the sound even more. The M16s are so controlled and even handed that even an aggressive sounding amp

pack will be tamed. Neutral to warm sounding amplifiers will simply enhance the flavour of a speaker which is sonically mature and stable.

I had a few friends over one evening for an informal session involving a huge range of music, not for background listening but also not critical. After the initial comments about how good the M16s look and a good hour into playback with choices coming mainly from Spotify through smartphones to my Mac, a friend summed it up. He said 'I love the fact that they don't sound in your face but at the same time you can hear everything in the music and they sound a lot bigger than their physical size'. 'You've hit the nail on the head, I said to my non-audiophile friend, 'now try elaborating that into an entire review', he laughed, 'I don't need too'.

Sometimes just a few simple words will suffice. Sometimes less really is more. That's where I am with the Revel Concerta2 M16. Although my first impressions were not that favourable, I stuck with the speakers and discovered that when isolated they became a truly musical instrument. Over longer listening periods I was glad that the Revels do what they do. First impressions can be misleading. As in life, real substance and satisfaction arrive through dedication and patience and the Revels prove the point admirably.

Conclusion

To some Audiophiles £950 is not a lot of money, but a thousand pounds on a pair of transducers is still a large investment to many. The Revel M16s are cohesive, smooth, forgiving and easy to integrate with equipment. They're a safe bet. They can respond to, and deserve, the best equipment money can buy, but at the same time their tonal qualities will allow them to be a primary upgrade for any budget system.

When approaching your local dealer for a listen it is essential that you discuss a home demo. Take your time; the M16s will grow on you and could prove to be indispensable. I can imagine many people spending years of sonic bliss with these speakers and being ever so grateful that they had the patience to run them in. Find the correct isolation and stands and begin to build a system around them.

AT A GLANCE

Build Quality - Modern looks and a great deep lacquered finish. The lack of visual fixings coupled with the design of the front baffle is very pleasing

Sound Quality - Smooth, weighty and communicative with a terrific soundstage that belies the speaker's dimensions, an absolute fatigue-free listen

Value For Money - The Revel Concerta2 M16 is good value for money and the sonic wealth of the speaker befits its price point. It's a real world speaker at a real world price

Pros:

Fatigue free

Large soundstage

Very engrossing

Great looks

Cons:

A little tricky to setup, but once right...

The matching stands are expensive

Price: £950

SPECIFICATIONS

CROSSOVER FREQUENCIES: 2.1kHz

ENCLOSURE TYPE: Bass-Reflex via Rear-Firing Port

HIGH-FREQUENCY DRIVE COMPONENTS: 1" Aluminum Tweeter with Acoustic Lens Waveguide

NOMINAL IMPEDANCE: 6 Ohms

INPUT CONNECTIONS: Five-way binding posts

LOW FREQUENCY EXTENSION: 55Hz, 50Hz, 45Hz (-3 dB, -6 dB, -10 dB)

LOW-FREQUENCY DRIVE COMPONENTS: 6.5" Aluminum Cone Woofer

RECOMMENDED AMPLIFIER POWER: 50-120W

SENSITIVITY: 86dB (2.83V @ 1M)

DIMENSIONS: 14.75" x 8.6" x 10.76" (37cm x 22cm x 27cm)

WEIGHT: 16 lbs