



Little big man these are the speakers that'll give a room-filling sound for just £100

TDL's new mini-monitors love small spaces

TDL Near Field Monitors

Loudspeakers: £100

For Assured and confident; impressive bass and detailed treble

Against Need good stands and positioning close to the rear wall; not ideal speakers for big rooms

Verdict ★★★★★

For listeners in small rooms, the baby TDLs are simply stunning, with a remarkable big-box sound from what are, after all, small cabinets. Powerful and easy to drive, the NFM's sound even better when used with big amplification

TDL 0494 441191

The latest speakers from High Wycombe-based TDL are a far cry from its mainstream products, yet display many of the same sonic attributes: a rich, powerful, tuneful bass, treble clarity, good detail, and value for money.

For just £100 a pair you get a pair of small (27cm high) boxes in either black or rosewood-look finish, using a 12mm combination cone/dome tweeter and a big-for-the-box 13cm doped paper cone

bass/mid driver piece. The cabinet is rear-ported to boost the bass, and a single pair of terminals is provided to accept either banana plugs or bare cable ends.

OK, so there are enough small, ported speakers at around £100, but the NFM's neither feel, nor sound, run-of-the-mill. Instead they look classy and throw out a very impressive performance.

Unbox the NFM's and despite the lack of a real wood finish – what d'you expect for £100? – they're well-finished, and acceptably dead-sounding when rapped with the knuckles. That high-quality build is carried through to the sound of the TDL's, which is deftly-tailored and solid.

These are speakers designed for small rooms and, while they won't fill cavernous listening spaces with sound, they'll be perfectly at home in most modern living rooms. They're designed for use close to a rear wall, and can sound a little thin without wall reinforcement. TDL recommends either wall-brackets or stands to support the

speakers, and the Atacama SE24s (at around £60, the small speaker stands of the moment).

Thus supported and positioned, the TDL's are capable of amazing results. Forget the idea that small boxes mean small bass – play fast rock and the NFM's deliver not only a fluid, exciting bass but also an open, involving midband and treble. Only in the upper reaches of the frequency range can they sound a shade harsh with the grilles off – replacing them tames this slight over-exuberance.

Classical music, too, is treated to a full-scale performance, with a fine detail and atmosphere. Instruments are realistic and well-located in the soundstage, and only if you play symphonies at concert hall levels will you approach the TDL's' limits. In these thin-walled, noise-pollution-sensitive times, the beauty of these speakers is that they deliver the thrills without you having to turn up the volume.

That said, the TDL's, with 88dB/W/m sensitivity and 8ohm nominal impedance, give even

most amplification an easy time – the suggested power range is 15–60W, so amps like Denon's PMA250III, the Award-winning Marantz PM44SE or any of a number of excellent amps around £200 will be perfectly at home here. But these speakers are also sufficiently revealing to relish the quality on offer from more powerful amps – our Audiolab 8000C/8000M pre/monoblocs combo made the NFM's sound stunning, even though the amps were barely at tickover level.

These TDL's deserve serious consideration for buyers searching for a capable speaker at an affordable price. They're room-friendly in small spaces, look suitably discrete with their grilles in place, and are extremely easy to drive. Their sound is assured and confident with a variety of music and their strong real wood cabinets are built to last. Spend some of the money their bargain price will save you on some good quality stands, and we think you'll love these Near Field Monitors.