

TDL controls the bass to make a £250 cracker

TDL RTL-2

Loudspeakers: £250

For Warm, deep and punchy bass extension; superb value for money
Against Need careful positioning to sound at their best, but that's all
Verdict ★★★★★

Well done, TDL! Terrific value for the money, these floorstanders sound every bit as good as they look. They're easy to match with a wide range of systems, and they're a great choice if you want a big and bassy sound without it costing you the earth – but take time with positioning
TDL Electronics 0494 441191

TDL, best known for upmarket floorstanding speakers, has finally broken into the budget market with a range of four new products. The £250 RTL-2s are the less expensive of two new floorstanders – and yet they provide the sort of sound you'd expect from a speaker costing twice the price.

Once run-in (48 hours constant use is sufficient), the full potential of these inexpensive little towers is brought to bear. The two-way transmission line design lends the relatively compact units plenty of

bass weight and power, so much so that we found the speakers work best away from rear walls.

A good couple of feet, at least, will allow them the right sort of space in which to "breathe", and keeps the bass in check. Too close to the rear wall and the results are far from pleasing, with a loose, stodgy, bloated and unrepresentative bottom end. When positioned correctly the bass extends and the midrange clears to leave a more open, detailed sound that's truly rewarding.

On the floor but relatively compact towers, the RTL-2s, throw down a bass that belies their size

That's certainly good news for anyone looking for a pair of inconspicuous floorstanders which are easily driven (20W to 80W amps are recommended). Fast and immediate, the RTL-2s withstand any musical bombardment with a keen grip on dance, rock, pop, classical, or anything else you care to put their way.

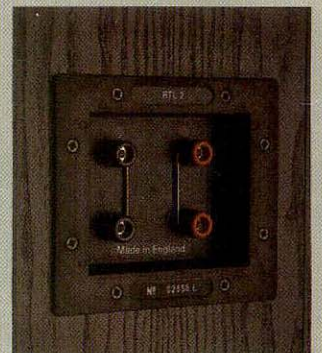
In a suitably modest system, driven by Pioneer's A-400 amp, the TDLs were right at home (not that a far more expensive system showed up any discernible flaws). The substantial bass and midrange weight is complemented by a crisp, articulate top end, not a treble response that'll have you gritting your teeth. In fact the RTL-2s take plenty of punishment and remain well mannered as the volume is cranked up.

If you want detail, warmth, good stereo imagery and the sort of expansive soundstage and dynamic scale that only floor-standing loudspeakers can deliver, then the RTL-2s are definitely a cost-effective contender.



TRANSMITTING THE BASS

The characteristic design of a transmission line loudspeaker lies in the construction of the cabinet. There's a chamber behind the drive units which tapers down to small vents at the bottom of the front baffle. The tapering is gradual and continuous, and the chamber is folded back and forth inside the loudspeaker to allow a longer length over which tapering can take place. This folded



They're biwireable, too – the removable links allow twin cables

"labyrinth" effectively operates as an acoustic pipe, taking the rear wave from the drive units, delaying it, and releasing it from the front vent in time to reinforce the lower frequencies.

This folding and the damping within the transmission line of the speaker is designed to ensure only the lowest frequencies from the drive unit emerge at the vent, extending the bass response of the speaker, and providing a lower frequency response than is usually possible with a conventional sealed or ported cabinet design.