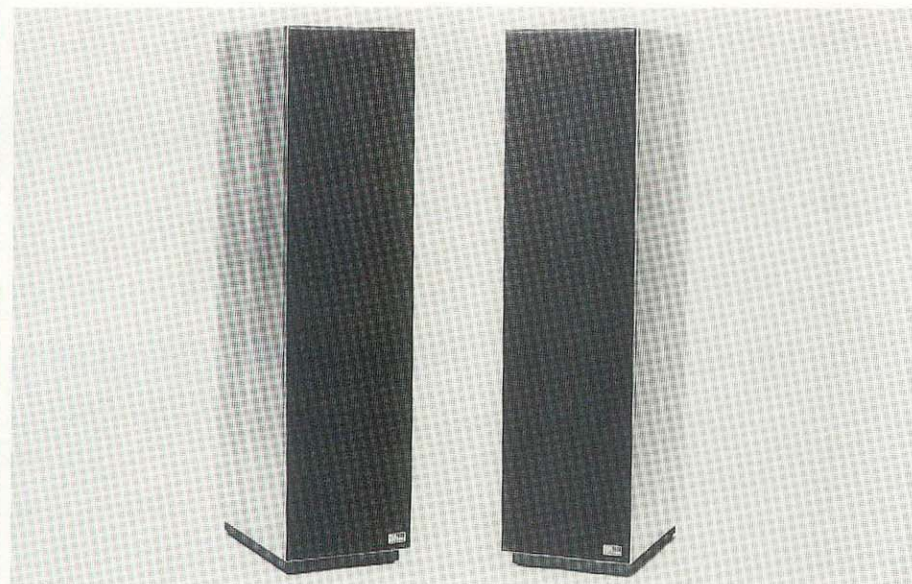


TDL MONITOR

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Visiting my very first hi-fi show 20 years ago, I encountered some of the largest loudspeakers I had ever seen, and was so awestruck by the sounds they were producing that I can still visualise the scene today. Those were IMF transmission line loudspeakers, and these are TDL transmission line loudspeakers. So what's in a name? The same John Wright is the man behind the operation, even though he's become the UK's most successful specialist hi-fi drive unit manufacturer along the way.

£1,600 is a lot to pay for a pair of speakers, but you do at least get plenty of content here. To start with there are four drivers for each channel – bass, midrange, treble and 'super-treble'. Then if you take a crowbar and lever off the side of the cabinet (I speak figuratively of course) you'll find a convoluted, folded and precisely damped column that starts behind the bass unit, snaking and tapering up and down to end in a port next to the floor.

This is the 'transmission line', which theoretically should be infinitely long and closed at the end, providing ideal nulling termination of the back radiation. The practical line is more of resistive reflex system in actuality, with a touch of the tuned column thrown in for good measure. It allows some of the back radiation to be used to reinforce the low bass, while at the same time keeping the bass unit resonance really low. It also incidentally ensures the whole cabinet is really rigid – a major bonus for any large loudspeaker.

19mm MDF cabinetwork is clothed in walnut, rosewood or black real veneer, and the well chamfered MDF-frame grille should be left on for aesthetic reasons. The four drivers are all TDL/Elac made, consisting of a 30x20mm polystyrene/fibreglass bass unit operating up to 300Hz, thence to a 100mm

polypropylene cone midrange to 3.5kHz; followed by a 25mm magnesium/aluminium dome tweeter augmented (for distribution reasons) by a 19mm mylar supertweeter above 13kHz. The crossover is inevitably very complex; twin, heavyweight gold-plated terminals allow a bi-wire/-amp option.

LAB REPORT

On our rating sensitivity is a rather below average 85dB/W, but with an easy enough impedance characteristic, prodigious power handling (note the low distortion), and of course exceptional bass extension.

The 1m reference response shows very good balance, marred by a 5dB bass 'bump' centred on 70Hz and some (partly grille-induced) 'glitches' around the mid/treble crossover region. The 2m set is remarkably good for such a large baffle, with slight loss of energy around 2-4kHz. The only 'glitch' is at 15 per cent above the axis – of concern only to those who indulge in unusual practices whilst hanging from chandeliers. The room averaged response, however, does indicate a rather over-heavy low bass, plus a curious c8kHz peak in the treble – shades of the triple hump pattern here.

SOUND QUALITY

I don't know how successful we were at presenting the TDL 'blind', because I had to help get it on the stand, but I think the favourable panel response remains valid. The *Monitor* was not without its critics, but the effortless and extended bass was much appreciated, adding impressive 'scale' on classical programme if a bit 'loose' and 'heavy' for best rock reproduction.

Space and detail are convincingly portrayed in a soundfield that is impressively solid, stable and coherent. However, the mild but isolated treble brightness was a minor

source of irritation and there was criticism of a certain lack of 'life' at lower levels. CI seems to suit the *Monitor* rather better than vinyl.

CONCLUSIONS

The *Monitor* will not be to every taste, and will suit only those with large rooms and fat wallets. But it delivers objective and subjective performance, alongside sufficient build quality and engineering content to fully justify an admittedly high price, and should be particularly favoured by classical CD fans.

TEST RESULTS

Size (height x width x depth)	118.5 x 30 x 47cm
Recommended amplifier power	25 – 250 watt
Recommended placement	on matching stands, min. 0.5m from boundaries
Frequency response (± 3 dB, 2m)	35Hz – 20kHz
Low frequency rolloff (-6 dB/1m)	28Hz
Sensitivity (ref 2.83V-1W/Bohms; 1m)	85dB
Impedance characteristic (ease of drive)	good
Forward response uniformity	very good
Typical price per pair inc VAT	£1600

