



A CPM FIRST LOOK

JBL

LSR308 TWO-WAY POWERED STUDIO MONITORS



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PRICE CATEGORY.

REVIEWER / ANDREW STONE

When I was asked to review a set of the new JBL 3 Series Powered Studio Monitors I jumped at the chance. Until two years ago I'd never been much of a JBL guy when it came to reference monitors, but when I heard the big brothers to the 3 Series (the LSR6328s), I became a fan. So getting to listen to these new monitors sounded like an intriguing prospect.

JBL makes it clear that this model is designed to “deliver professional performance at most affordable price points,” which typically sets the stage for a product to be a budget offering. Be that as it may, I found these 3 Series monitors are quite robust. They are offered in both five-inch and eight-inch versions. I will say they chose wisely to send me the LSR308 eight-inch version. Someone out there knows I have the need for rock.

INSIDE INFORMATION

With the fact that these are on the lower-budget side they are a bit light on extra features that some of us may be used to, but everything one might need is included and simple to deal with. Here's a quick look at what's on board: The front of each speaker unit is as simple as it gets: one LED power indicator accompanying an eight-inch woofer and a one-inch tweeter. The LED indicator shows power is being supplied to the dual 56-watt Class D amplifiers. The back is ported for the low-end (they refer to this as a “Slip Stream Port”—and here I was thinking it was just a bass port) and the input panel has two input jacks, equipped with both XLR and ¼-inch balanced TRS connectors as well as a +4dBu/-10 dBu input sensitivity switch. In addition, there is a rotary volume knob and low- and high-frequency trim switches fixed at +/- 2 dB centered at 115 Hz and 4.4 kHz respectively. An IEC power receptacle and a power switch completes the back panel features.

Before I get into how these speakers performed, one of the nicest features is JBL's new Image Control Waveguide. In the literature this is touted as creating “remarkable imaging, a wide sound-stage, and a solid ‘phantom center.’” Being skeptical of most product descriptions I read, it was remarkable to hear how this Waveguide sounds in the real world. The coverage is impressive. It truly opened up the sound field like nothing else I've heard in this price category. After experimenting with placement and re-aiming them several times, I could never discern a notable difference in the coverage pattern. The coverage was so smooth, there wasn't a defined “sweet spot” or a even a null. Both horizontally and vertically, the LSR308s really do have great coverage.

So specs, literature, and this Slip Stream hocus-pocus aside, how do they sound? Quite simply: extremely pure, thick and lovely. I had the opportunity to listen to them repeatedly for about a month, which gave me the chance to listen to all kinds of source material, mixing a few

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LIST PRICE	\$325 each

little projects here and there, and doing quite a bit of A/B comparison with my primary 6328 monitors. The LSR308s stayed transparent without being thin, remained full-bodied and smooth throughout the full frequency range, and were generously robust for monitors without any kind of subwoofer present.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

One thing I always look for in a speaker, whether a studio monitor or a large scale system: How transparent are they, really? What kind of "coloring" characteristics are happening within the speaker that affects the sound they are producing? I honestly couldn't detect anything like that happening with these (I hope that's not saying anything about my hearing). In fact, the more I listened to them, the more I began to forget they were even there, allowing me to just focus on the music. I love when that happens—good job, JBL.

Suffice it to say, if these were my main reference monitors I could be quite happy. And even though I know most self-respecting studio engineers don't rate a monitor on maximum output volume, I do need to tell you that these go really loud ... good and loud. In fact, since I've put them through their paces to this degree—let's just say if this was a car, I probably would have red-lined it a few times—they'll have to go back to the factory in the "B-stock" category. So, perhaps JBL won't care if I just hang onto them.

Professional audio veteran **ANDREW STONE** is production manager and audio director at Tulsa, Okla.'s Church on the Move (www.churchonthemove.com). CPM

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