

PMC twotwo.8

■■■ ACTIVE REFERENCE MONITORS

The largest in PMC's twotwo series, the twotwo.8 is an incredibly versatile option in a crowded market, writes **Nigel Palmer**.

SINCE STARTING with monitor commissions for the BBC in the early 90s, PMC, originally the Professional Monitor Company, has become a respected name in the loudspeaker world. Based at Luton in the UK the company is now a byword for practical and effective speaker design in all sizes, and lately its attention has turned again to the mid- and near-field market with three active monitors in the new twotwo range, the .5, .6, and lastly the .8, the subject of this review.

OVERVIEW

The 'twotwo' name stems from both a two-way driver configuration (all models have an offset 27mm soft dome tweeter and an LF unit) and the ability to use the speaker in either portrait or landscape (end or side) orientation without sonic trade-off – the tweeter should be innermost for the former and inner/uppermost for the latter. The 'point' designation describes the size of the bass driver in inches, so the one in the .8 is 8in, or 200mm.

Seen from the front in portrait mode the unit presents a business-like blue/black livery with tweeter at the top, bass driver below and the ATL or Advanced Transmission Line vent at the bottom of the cabinet. All PMC speakers have transmission lines, a folded internal labyrinth fed by the LF unit, 1.9m long in the .8, which extends bass response below that in an equivalent sealed cabinet; in this case it contributes to a 35Hz-25kHz usable frequency response.

To the rear is a panel with the speaker's electronics and connectors. At the top is an LED displaying current status

together with four navigation buttons: up, down, left, and right (holding up and down for more than two seconds reverts to the factory default state). The lower part of the panel has RCA/phono (unbalanced) analogue, XLR (balanced) analogue, and XLR AES digital inputs, as well as Cat5 networking in and thru ports. The heart of the twotwo range is a powerful DSP engine similar to that in the more expensive PMC IB2S-A, with a high-quality A-D converter on the analogue inputs and the ability to take AES digital signals at up to 192kHz. The signal processor provides volume control, equalisation, driver optimisation, and filtering at the 1.8kHz crossover point; it then converts back to analogue to feed the two onboard Class D amplifiers (150W LF and 50W HF) and hence to the drivers. The speaker's user interface offers a good level of control with input source, trim, and sensitivity, high and low shelving, and low rolloff adjustment, and there will also be an optional RJ45 wired remote connected via Cat5 mirroring those functions for easy setup from the listening position. The network facility is also used to link loudspeakers in digital mode with one as the master.

IN USE

As usual, once set up on stands about 2m apart I used the review pair of .8s to work with in Lowland Masters studio, in this case for two weeks. To begin with I adjusted the system's input sensitivity so I could operate at my usual reference level; once done I played some familiar material, and consequently dimmed the treble response to my taste



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with the HF shelving by -1.5dB, the low end being satisfactory with the speakers about half a metre into the room. Working with them on everyday mastering tasks the .8s gave a commendably accurate and neutral presentation, making EQ and dynamics decisions a breeze – in spite of their neutrality I found them good to listen to, and the net result was a non-fatiguing working day. After a short period of acclimatisation I found the twotwos effectively disappeared, allowing me to get on with the job unencumbered by monitor-related distractions. Although low frequency extension was sufficient for me in my room and similar to the response of

my usual loudspeakers, PMC offers subwoofer solutions for those requiring it.

I tried the XLR analogue and AES inputs while working with the .8s. Although taking the analogue route implies an additional A-D conversion in the signal path, this didn't trouble me sound-wise when compared to an all-digital approach. As I have a number of digital sources that would require a patchbay to use the digital input, I was content going in analogue from my DAC and being able to access them via that as usual. I also conducted a comparison with the speakers in both orientations, and although I used the landscape mode the majority of the time I found no significant difference in either way of working.

CONCLUSION

What I think PMC has produced in the twotwo.8 is a universal mid/near-field monitor. By this I mean that it could be used for any audio job and will be at home in any studio or location environment where box size isn't an issue: this is a major achievement, clearly the end result of much research. In spite of the active speaker sector being crowded at present I've little doubt both the twotwo range in general and the .8 in particular will be a success.

THE REVIEWER

NIGEL PALMER has been a freelance sound engineer and producer for over 20 years. He runs his CD mastering business Lowland Masters (www.lowlandmasters.com) from rural Essex.

INFORMATION

Feature set

- Advanced Transmission Line bass loading technology
- Extensive analogue and digital connectivity to 192kHz
- Powerful DSP engine controlling driver response, crossover, and EQ
- No sonic differences between vertical and horizontal orientation
- Two on-board Class D amplifiers (150W LF and 50W HF)

www.pmc-speakers.com