

MORDAUNT-SHORT PERFORMANCE 6 LE

Realistically priced floorstanders with a moulded polymer resin enclosure

PRICE £4,000 CONTACT Marantz ■ 01753 680868 ■ www.mordauntshort.com

Although Mordaunt-Short is best known for high-value budget loudspeakers, developing an upmarket flagship range provides a test bed for new ideas that can subsequently trickle down into the company's more affordable models.

The Performance 6 Limited Edition is a subtly revised variation on 2004's Performance 6 theme. Except that the LE is only available in high gloss Midnight Black, the two models are visually identical, with an elegantly shaped moulded enclosure and four metal diaphragm drivers operating in a three-way configuration.

Under the skin, the crossover and enclosure have both undergone refinement. The former has a new printed circuit board and Mordaunt-Short's dual value parallel capacitor technique using polypropylene types from ClarityCap. 'Wood is not an engineering material' was a catch phrase at the original Performance 6 launch, to stress the advantages of a moulded polymer resin enclosure. Wood does have limitations, and there is no denying that a moulded monocoque structure offers several potential advantages, most obviously the irregular and exceptionally elegant shape.

All the surfaces are curved, and the whole is strongly tapered – slim and very shallow at the top, but slightly wider and considerably deeper at the base. Curved surfaces are much more rigid than flat ones, and also scatter internal reflections so focused standing waves are not created. Moulding also allows for much more complex shapes inside. The drive units are bolted to rods that extend forwards from the thick rear spine of the enclosure, while strategic ribs reinforce the sides. For this LE version, the polymer resin has been reformulated and the internal details have been refined to improve performance.

A full three-way design, twin 165mm bass units have dished 120mm metal diaphragms with radial stiffening ribs. The midrange has a 75mm dish-shaped diaphragm. The unique and radical tweeter assembly features a complex fat metal rod behind the diaphragm drilled by a logarithmic spiral of thin, differentially tuned pipes, to create a flat acoustic impedance and allow



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through some non-coherent treble to add air and spaciousness.

A hefty metal base is invisibly incorporated, ensuring fine physical stability and secure spike accommodation. Three matching pairs of terminals are mounted low at the rear.

Far-field averaged in-room response traces confirmed this speaker should be kept well clear of walls. They showed a fine overall balance right across the audio band, with unusually even bass above a 22Hz 6dB point (in room). The midrange and treble were exceptionally smooth, apart from a slightly hot mid-treble (5–7kHz). Sensitivity came out at 88dB, but the amplifier load is quite demanding through the bass region.

Listening to the LEs, one was immediately aware of the superb overall neutrality and clarity. Yes, the top end is arguably a shade strong, but it's delightfully sweet, open, well integrated, and never sounds forced, while bass always sounds tight and controlled, as well as satisfyingly deep and powerful.

Put on the Chemical Brothers, wind the volume right up and touch the sides of the enclosure. Hardly any vibration comes through, so it is obvious that the radical enclosure is doing a fine job. That is further emphasised by the lack of boxy effects and the airy-but-precise stereo imaging. You simply hear the music, and the stereo mix, with fine focus and freedom from boxiness. Having said that, transparency and image depth did seem somewhat limited, dynamics a

little constrained, and the bass end of the spectrum sounds a trifle congested and lacking a little freedom of expression. Low frequencies sort of hang on in there,

rather than taking the lead in driving the music along.

Dynamic range is impressive, and low-level detail comes through well. Instrumental textures are well portrayed, colorations very low, and speech sounds are unusually clear, clean and open. Perhaps the LE's biggest strength is its ability to sound sweet, open, coherent and detailed even at very low listening levels, yet remain free from aggression when being played seriously loud. ■■

Paul Messenger

See the July 2008 edition of *Hi-Fi Choice* for the original review of this product