

JBL LSR308 Active Monitors

Imaging and detail
that should cost more,
but don't

BY STEVE LA CERRA

THE JBL 3 Series powered studio monitors are designed to deliver pro performance at an affordable price. The LSR308 is the larger of two monitors in the series, employing a magnetically shielded 8-inch woofer and a 1-inch soft-dome HF driver in a ported cabinet. A 56-watt, Class D amplifier powers each driver, enabling the LSR308 to achieve maximum SPLs exceeding 110dB.

Molded into the LSR308's front panel is JBL's patented Image Control Waveguide. Initially developed for JBL's M2 Master

SUMMARY

STRENGTHS Translates mixes well, excellent stereo imaging, good value for the money.

LIMITATIONS Low-level hiss may be audible under extremely quiet conditions.

**\$325 MSRP/each;
\$249/each street**
www.jblpro.com/3series



Reference Monitor, the Image Control Waveguide was engineered to ensure a broad sweet spot, wide stereo image, and resolution of subtle details—all of which I found to be true. An LED power indicator is recessed into this panel, set between the vertically aligned tweeter and woofer.

On the rear panel you'll find the power switch, XLR, and TRS input jacks, a volume control, and three switches: The recessed switch toggles input sensitivity between +4dBu and -10dBV, while the remaining two switches are HF and LF trim controls with positions for 0, -2, and +2dB. Initially I set these flat. The quick-start guide includes helpful suggestions for placement and for setting the input sensitivity and volume; further information can be obtained from the user guide available from JBL's website.

In the Mix I placed the monitors on Auralex MoPads approximately five feet apart in an equilateral triangle with the mix position. When setting up the LSR308s, I noticed a small amount of hiss emanating from the HF

driver. This was present regardless of the input sensitivity setting, even with my Dangerous Music Monitor ST system disconnected. It was, however, audible only when I had my ear near the tweeter.

Listening on the LSR308s to projects I engineered in the past produced interesting results. I could hear detail in the ambience and depth that I hadn't noticed before, and in general the sound stage extended beyond the width of the speakers. JBL has achieved its goal of an expanded sweet spot: You can listen over a wide angle and still hear consistently without the feeling of "Oh, I have to listen from *here*."

The first mix I created using the LSR308s was a song from singer/songwriter Ernest Buckley's forthcoming CD. I was surprised at how easy it was to create an excellent mix on these monitors, especially since I hadn't tracked this song. I was even more impressed at how well the mix translated to other systems.

The first mix was a bit thick in the low-mids, and over the course of a few days other mixes translated similarly. Changing the LF trim to +2 made me work the low end more carefully, and remixing the song resulted in a tightened, less-congested low-midrange, which made more room for Ernest's vocal and helped define the bass from the kick drum. The bottom end was tight and full, and the overtones on complex instruments like cymbals were reproduced realistically. Initially I was afraid that this might be monitor hype, but the timbres were consistent with what I heard over other playback systems.

Mission Accomplished By providing pro-level playback at a personal-studio price, JBL has clearly achieved its goals with the LSR308. It's an excellent system that makes mixing easier. If you're looking for a new set of monitors, the LSR308 deserves serious consideration. ■

Steve La Cerra is an independent audio engineer based in New York. In addition to being an Electronic Musician contributor, he mixes front-of-house for Blue Öyster Cult and teaches audio at Mercy College, Dobbs Ferry campus.