

REVIEWS MOREL OCTAVE 6
STANDMOUNT LOUDSPEAKER £1,500



White fantastic

The Octave 6 loudspeakers are rather different to their rivals at the price, but **Ed Selley** sees the potential

For nearly 40 years Morel has been quietly and confidently going about the business of making speakers in a way that is different to more mainstream competitors. The Israel-based concern has a wide variety of speakers ranging from conventional box designs to sub-sat packages all the way to custom install and car audio products. Almost all feature elements that are unique. Different is one thing, but is it better?

The Octave 6s tested here are firmly in the middle of the Morel box

The Octaves are extremely hard to provoke into any form of aggression

speaker lineup sitting below the more expensive Sopran and gloriously named Fat Lady range topper. The small range comprises a floorstander and the standmount you see here. The Octaves have been a Morel range for well over a decade and the 6s are the latest incarnation. Slightly confusingly, Morel also offers the Octave Signature range, which although visually similar is not the same as the Octave 6 models and represents a different price point.

The Octaves are superficially conventional two-way standmounts, but there are some elements of the design that are somewhat novel. The first is the cabinet, both in terms of the shape and the materials used. With the recent rise in lacquered finished speakers it looks more normal than it might have done a few years ago, but the finish is the result of a bespoke polymer applied to the MDF and is intended to aid the damping and resonance of the cabinet. This means that internally they have no damping, relying

instead on the polymer. The form factor is also unusual. The Morels are only 30cm tall including the tweeter housing, but considerably deeper (and deeper still when the substantial speaker terminals are taken into account), which gives them a very distinctive appearance. The enclosures are rear ported and the ports are arranged to sit exactly on axis with the bass driver.

The drivers themselves are also unique. Morel produces its own drivers inhouse (and indeed sells them as separate line items) and the ones in the Octaves have been designed specifically for them. The mid bass driver is a 6in unit made from what Morel describes as DPC (Damped Polymer Composite). This uses a fairly hefty 3in voice coil of aluminium wrapped around a titanium core powered by a hybrid neodymium and ferrite magnet. The partnering tweeter is a 28mm soft dome unit, which is also bespoke. The crossover that joins them is derived from the Fat Lady unit and is set out to offer the best integration possible while also keeping the number of components in the signal path down. To this end, the Octaves only support single wiring.

Both drivers are kept rather well hidden. This is because the Octaves are fitted with metal grilles that are mounted to the cabinet and are a awkward to remove. Combined with the distinctive cabinet form and the very bright white finish you have a pair of speakers that won't be to everybody's taste. That said, I rather like them. These are speakers that are going to make a visual statement rather than blend in, but in the flesh they look rather smart and the fit and finish is of a very high standard.

Some care will need to be taken in partnering them, however. The sensitivity is given as 89dB/W and Morel describes them as: "amplifier

DETAILS

PRODUCT
Morel Octave 6

ORIGIN
Israel

TYPE
Two-way standmount loudspeaker

WEIGHT
7.3kg

DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
190 x 300 x 340mm

FEATURES
• Bespoke 28mm soft dome tweeter
• 6in composite mid bass driver
• Quoted impedance: 4ohms
• Quoted frequency response: 50Hz-18kHz at +/-1.5dB

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friendly", but impedance is claimed at a firm 4ohms and in use the Octave 6s don't feel that sensitive. I test them with Naim's burly Supernait 2 and the equally potent Audio Analogue Verdi Cento and both work well, but are called upon to deliver a fair amount of their output. The Morels are also fairly sensitive to positioning. The large rear ports can interact with rear walls if they are placed less than 20cm from them. With this attended to and some toe-in, they can really start to give a sense of their character and capability.

Sound quality

There are considerable abilities in the performance of the Morel Octave 6s. After a few days of running, they start to reveal some very admirable traits. For relatively small speakers, the bass performance is genuinely excellent. Morel claims 50Hz at +/-1.5dB (and rather more at +/-3dB) and this feels entirely believable in use.

Furthermore, this is not some freak blip reached after an unpleasant recessed part of the frequency response, but the crest of a very even and thoroughly controlled response wave. If you provide the power amplification, the Morels will happily provide the impact.

Listen further and the even handedness across the frequency response becomes more and more impressive. The advantage of the drivers being built inhouse and

Metal 'Lotus' grilles are designed to be acoustically transparent



Q&A

Oren Mordechai
R&D manager



ES: Are there any key technology features of the Octave series that have been present from the original model onwards?

OM: Yes, many elements have been carried over – in the woofers we kept the giant 3in (75mm) Hexatech™ aluminium voice coil and External Voice Coil technology. The voice coil bobbin has changed from aluminium in previous models to titanium in the Octave 6 – improving accuracy and allowing exceptionally fast transient response. Morel also still employs the one-piece integrated dome and surround cone in the mid bass driver. The tweeter is also an improved version of the previous design.

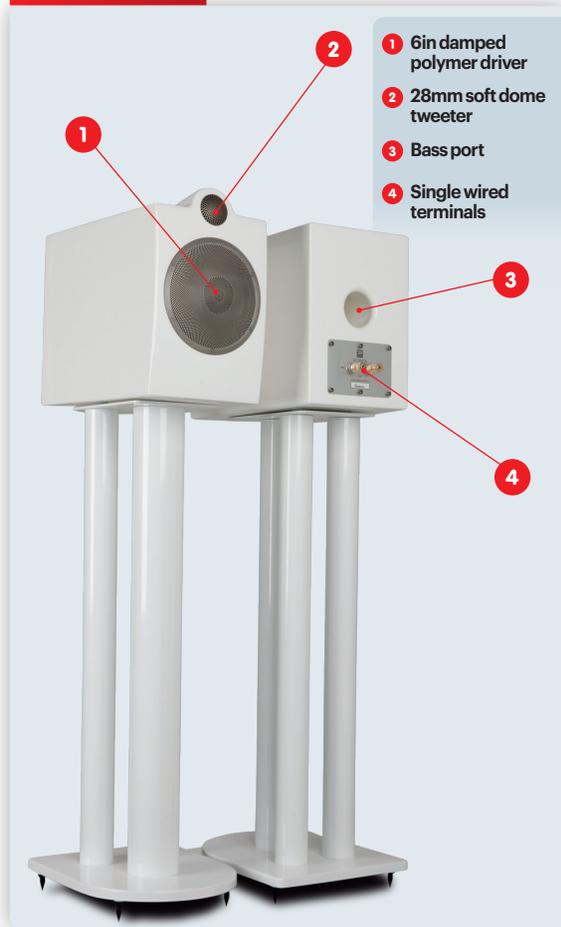
What benefits do you feel that using a relatively short, but deep, cabinet confers?

Wave dispersion is made easier due to this type of design as there is a greater space between the membrane and the back of the cabinet allowing the returning waves to break up with no damping, but with partitions only. As a result the air flow is much better allowing the sound to be open and airy.

What is the thinking behind the fixed metal grilles used on the Octave 6?

The Lotus grille has a specific pattern of holes in different shapes and diameters engineered to minimise the 'horn' effect (high-frequency peak caused by the resonant frequency of multiple holes of the same size). Innovative metal processing enables the construction of a very thin nearly transparent grille that has minimal effects on the sound (in comparison to standard grilles), although we still believe removing it will make the speaker sound better. The tweeter also has a specially designed triangle so it is protected even without the Lotus grille.

IN SIGHT



HOW IT COMPARES

The Morels face no shortage of rivals at the £1,500 price point. Perhaps the closest and most capable rival is PMC's highly regarded twenty.21, which are £125 cheaper and available in a wood veneer. The PMC is one of the very few standmounts that can match the Morel's superb low-end extension thanks to their transmission line design. Where they differ is their behaviour in the upper registers. The PMCs are more explicit and can sound more exciting, but the Morels smoother and better integrated treble works well with less immaculate material. Choosing between them comes down to preference, but both are superbly talented.

designed from the outset to work with one another is readily apparent in their seamless handover and nigh-on perfect integration. The electronically enhanced orchestra of Daft Punk's *Tron Legacy* is presented with an assurance that considerably larger speakers can fail to achieve. There is no single point from the highest frequencies reproduced to the lowest that anything is being over emphasised or recessed and it is only because of it being at the extremity that the bass response stands out.

This even handedness does come at the expense of some fine detail that speakers with a less even presentation have an easier job of highlighting. The detail is generally there, but it doesn't leap out from the mix in the same way as some rivals. The result is performance that is accurate and balanced, but perhaps not as emotionally engaging as some rivals with more midrange emphasis. By the same token, the Octaves are extremely hard to provoke into any form of aggression or harshness even with levels pegged at their firmly antisocial highest.

This is a huge advantage for those of us who have favourite albums that

are not exactly the last word in recording quality. The Octaves pound through Unkle's *War Stories* with a power and agility that is bordering on the addictive, but manage to keep the compression and slightly harsh presentation firmly under control. Behind the neutrality are speakers with a willingness to rock and they are happiest with some tempo to the music you are asking them to play.

Conclusion

The performance with more relaxed music is unfailingly competent, but the very control of the Octaves could lead to accusations of them being slightly sterile. Unusually, this doesn't seem to change too significantly when swapping between the Naim and Audio Analogue amps. The valve preamp in the Verdi Cento lends a fractional midrange enhancement, but this is nowhere near as pronounced as it is in some other speakers at a similar price. The Audio Analogue manages to generate a wider soundstage with the Octaves, but although Morel claims that the Octave 6s have no sweet spot, I find the positioning that works in my listening room generates a definite – albeit fairly large – sweet spot where the speakers are at their best.

The Morels are individualistic speakers in all senses of the word. From the distinctive shape and appearance to the requirements on partnering electronics and positioning. Happily, this distinctiveness is underpinned by a confidence and raw ability that is hard to ignore. If you are limited in terms of space and prefer your music with a bit of drive to it, there are very few speakers of a similar size that can produce such an unfailingly powerful and poised performance. Some aspects of the design are undoubtedly unusual, but the end result is a very impressive pair of speakers ●

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY ★★★★★	LIKE: Powerful, well integrated and very refined performance; excellent build
VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★	DISLIKE: Not always the most exciting performer; appearance may divide opinion
BUILD QUALITY ★★★★★	WE SAY: A capable speaker with some impressive attributes
EASE OF DRIVE ★★★★★	

OVERALL

