

Dynaudio Xeo 2 | Stereo speakers | £995

“Packing a hugely accomplished sound”

FOR Taut, controlled low-end; timing; integrated design

AGAINST Appearance is barely in keeping with price



If Dynaudio ran a TV commercial for the Xeo 2s, we imagine ‘more than just speakers’ would be somewhere in the tagline. And unlike the car and shampoo products that ride the popular slogan, there’d be some truth behind the marketing hyperbole. With digital amplifiers, DACs and Bluetooth receivers built-in, these two-way active standmounts should be seen as more of a system; as four (possibly five) hi-fi boxes in two. When you look at it that way, £995 doesn’t seem as much for these dinky things now, does it?

The idea’s simple: just plug both speakers into the mains and add a source – whether that’s a smartphone or laptop connected via Bluetooth, or a TV or hi-fi component plugged into one of the Xeo 2s’ 3.5mm, RCA or optical inputs.

Ripe for resolution

The latter supports files up to 24-bit/192kHz, so hi-res and network playback from a connected streamer is possible. Alternatively, the optional £295 Dynaudio Connect can bring wi-fi onboard the Xeo 2s for DLNA and Spotify Connect compatibility, as well as USB (with support up to 96kHz) and coaxial (to 192kHz) inputs.

Neat, huh? That’s what we thought in 2014 when awarding their big brothers, the Xeo 4s (£1775), five stars for their versatility and so-good-we-can’t-believe-it’s-wireless performance. Dynaudio set out to design the Xeo 2s as more affordable, smaller versions but, although they succeed in fulfilling the same promise in a smaller package, a few changes had to be made along the way.

Fresh ingredients

An all-new 28mm soft-dome tweeter and 14cm Magnesium Silicate Polymer cone driver are each driven by 65W of digital Class D amplification – up from the Xeo 4s’ 50W. While in theory that sounds like more power from a smaller footprint, the greater wattage is actually to balance out the much smaller cabinet volume.

How small? 25cm tall and no deeper than the width of the average outstretched hand, each box can be carried comfortably under an arm. That means they don’t require a particularly large desk when spread in a stereo set-up – or even one at all if you buy the dedicated footstand or wall bracket.

The choice of colour is still between black and silver, but without the premium

look or feel of the Xeo 4s’ lacquer coating it’s reasonable to at first feel a little short-changed when it comes to design. Still, the satin finish and aluminium baffle are, if not particularly head-turning, smart and immaculately applied.

We like the control integration too: flush touch buttons on the top, with the baffle sporting two small LED indicators. Pressing ‘O’ switches on the speakers, and holding down the plus and minus volume buttons either side initiates Bluetooth pairing. It really couldn’t be simpler.

During wired connectivity, the Xeo 2s automatically scan the inputs for a signal, though there is also an intuitive, well-marked remote the size of a Milky bar for manual selection too.

At home in space

You can tweak the EQ settings to suit the speakers’ position in the room, but even with ‘wall’ activated, we found they hit the best balance with at least 10cm of space behind them. There, tonality occupies neutral territory and detail spreads evenly in a soundstage you’d think would belong to boxes twice the size. Like the shortest player on a basketball court, the modest boxes go

IN DETAIL...



Out of the box, the Xeo 2s sport a tweeter cover – boldly coloured so you won’t forget to remove it...



Neat, simple top-mounted controls: press the two volume touch buttons together for Bluetooth pairing



A recessed connection panel means you can set the host speaker against a wall, free of protruding wires



The ‘rivets’ around the mid-bass drivers and tweeters create a smart, modern-industrial look



Though modest in size, the Xeo 2s include digital amps, DACs and Bluetooth receivers. Just plug them in and attach your choice of source

KEY FEATURES



130W power



Bluetooth

24-bit/192kHz

(optical only)

"The precision and rhythmic embrace is sustained as jubilant synth lines twist around one another and lace over the top of the impassioned vocals"

out with something to prove, affording music scale and authority in abundance.

Is wireless sound a compromise? Usually yes, although the Xeo 2s sound anything but compromised. Their Bluetooth presentation enjoys a clarity and sophistication that masks their wirelessness. One advantage of active speakers is that engineers can tune the various elements to work in harmony - and it pays off here, as the frequencies are well integrated.

Bass power and depth also belie physical proportions, and praise of the low-end can be extended to agility too. The drubbing drums introducing Anohni's *Crisis* are full (never tubby) and controlled, bouncing along in step with the scything synths.

That precision and rhythmic agility is sustained as jubilant synth lines twist around one another and lace over the top of

her vocals, which sound as cavernous and impassioned as the lyrical theme implies.

Those expressive mids hold the centre of the soundstage with focus and solidity aplenty, and meet an articulate treble where the dulcet tones of the twinkling electronica chime sweetly in the open headroom. There's a level of transparency you'd be hard-pressed to find from a similarly priced system of hi-fi separates.

Jump to the beat

Tempo changes in the track play into the hands of the punctual, feisty Xeos - they don't stutter as a squall of dense electronics breaks out from starker, more meandering instrumentals.

Timeliness and musicality both seem to come naturally to the Dynaudios, and nothing feels like hard labour for them -

even the oft-demanding task of handling a lo-res Spotify stream with aplomb.

Thanks to the Xeo's forgiving nature, they still sound enjoyable compared with CD-quality WAVs, with space, detail and precision in decent supply.

Sound quality compromised for the sake of convenience? Not here. Versatile, easy to house and packing a hugely accomplished sound worthy of their asking price, the Dynaudio Xeo 2s are a near-complete system in speakers' clothing - and a great one at that, whatever your source.

WHAT HI-FI? says

Rating ★★★★★

SOUND



COMPATIBILITY



BUILD



VERDICT An impressive pair of do-it-all speakers in which compact dimensions and great sound happily co-exist