

Fohhn Linea LX150

Compact Line Array

These sleek column speakers from prestigious PA brand Fohhn kick out more sound than their size might suggest...

PAUL WHITE

I use a pair of Fohhn Linea LX100 speakers for my own gigs, alongside either a Fohhn 12-inch or 15-inch sub for the bass, depending on the venue size. They are extremely small, the sound quality is closer to hi-fi than PA, and yet they can fill a deceptively large space, due to the line array's 'wide but shallow' dispersion pattern, which provides good coverage at the front while carrying to the back of the venue significantly more effectively than a typical box-type speaker. The LX150 reviewed here uses exactly the same technology and driver design as the LX100s, but it packs 12 four-inch neodymium drivers into its longer aluminium column (the LX100 has eight drivers). These are protected by a perforated metal grille, while a tough powder-coat finish protects the metal. My LX100s have so far remained unscratched, which suggests that it is pretty effective.

The use of a one-inch compression HF driver to handle the highest frequencies marks a departure from strict line-array principles, but this is mounted in a waveguide designed to produce a cylindrical dispersion (to match that of

the cone drivers), rather than the spherical dispersion that would result from simple flat baffle mounting. Although these speakers are passive, they incorporate what Fohhn describe as an 'intelligent crossover', with an Intelligent Protection Circuit (IPC) to guard against overload.

Many of the smaller Fohhn systems are based around their active subs, which are fitted with Class-D amplifiers that supply the necessary power both for themselves and also for one or two tops. To provide the quickest and simplest setup, then, the LX150s ideally need to be used with one or two Fohhn active subwoofers, as these include DSP speaker management, where entering the model number for the tops automatically loads the correcting settings for the crossover, limiter and so on. The LX150s are designed for use with the AS10, AS20 and AS30 active subs or, with suitable amplifiers, the passive XS10, XS20 and XS30 subwoofers. However, you can also use your own amplifiers and speaker controllers, as long as the correct crossover frequency and power limit are set. The speaker impedance is 8Ω per cabinet.

A number of mounting options are available, including eight M6-thread suspension points. The speakers are suitable both for installation and portable PA work, but if you want to put them on speaker poles, you'll need to also buy the necessary fittings — in this case, a couple of SA6 stand adaptors, which fit to the rear of the speaker column using cap-head bolts. These have adjustment for tilt and are fitted with a pole clamp screw. Padded carrier bags are also available, and these take the speaker with the stand adaptor fitted, while leaving space for you to carry your Speakon and Powercon cables if necessary. I'd really recommend these bags, as they provide a decent degree of protection. The cabinets are fitted with both Speakon connectors (two, so you can link through them) and an eight-way Phoenix connector strip for fixed installations.

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PROS

- Light, compact and easy to set up.
- Clean sound quality.
- The line-array format puts the sound where it is most needed without wasting excessive power on the floor or ceiling.

CONS

- Costly for many bands gigging at the lower end of the food chain.

SUMMARY

This line array is one of the best examples of how modern driver and amp technology really can deliver a high-performance system that will fit into a hatchback.



Despite the small size of these speakers (13 x 146 x 12 cm), their nominal power handling is 600W. Their sensitivity is 96dB for one Watt at one metre, allowing a maximum SPL of 130dB: pretty loud, especially when you consider that they weigh less than 10kg each. The spec sheet quotes the frequency response of the columns as 65Hz to 20kHz, so a sub crossing over at the usual 100 or 120 Hz should be a good match.

On Test

Wales-based Fohhn dealer Stav Sound Services lent us a pair of LX150s and an XS30 powered 15-inch sub to handle the mainly acoustic stage at Malvern's outdoor West Fest. This took place in mid-July at the height of the 'rain and mud' season, so a special thanks go to Andy at Stav for both delivering and collecting the speakers in the the most grim of weather conditions.

For the setup, I used only the loaned Fohhn PA as the front-of-house system, and then set up my own smaller Fohhn system driven from a 12-inch sub (with the sub level set to minimum) as crossfills, to simplify the monitoring. I expected clarity, based on my experiences with my own system, and I wasn't disappointed, but those extra drivers both handle more power and, because the line is longer, tighten up the vertical dispersion a little more. The outcome in this case was that the sound at the front wasn't too overpowering, there was no 'hole' in the middle as might have been expected from conventional boxes spaced 12 metres or so apart, and there was still plenty of level at the back of what was actually a very long marquee that held around 1000 people at peak times. The sound was also pretty good outside, up to perhaps halfway across the main field, and, best of all, we could achieve more than enough vocal level without feedback poking its nose in.

We had solo classical performers, folky duos, an Eastern European dance outfit, hybrid electric/acoustic bands with percussion, and a loud and very rousing Irish band playing. Everyone was well pleased with the sound, both out front and on stage, and by the time the Irish band kicked in, the volume level was pretty high and limited only by the feedback threshold, as they had a whistle that needed miking.

Conclusion

Fohhn gear certainly doesn't come cheap, but in terms of how much clean sound you get for your money and how small and light their systems are, it all starts to look very attractive. These Linea LX150s are quite superb in terms of sound quality, sound level, coverage and convenience. They don't block the view of the band and they don't compromise the sound of quality acoustic instruments. Choosing this route could well save you the cost of a van, and maybe even a few chiropractor visits, too! Don't be fooled by their small size — add one or

two subwoofers and you will have one very serious sound system indeed. **■■■**

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