



Blok Stax 2G

Produced under the watchful eye of Monitor Audio, Blok's modular 'hi-fi furniture' combines acoustic engineering with contemporary design. Review: **Jamie Biesemans**

As the EISA Awards jury noted this year [*HFN* Oct '24], AV furniture is 'often overlooked... but has a crucial part to play'. Monitor Audio would agree, and having acquired Blok in 2019, it has launched a redesigned Stax 2G system this summer. Retaining its predecessor's wooden box-like supports and full-width shelves, the improved modular form-factor promises to be easier to configure and assemble.

Three (£775) or four (£1050) shelf racks are offered, or you can build your own by combining a Base unit and shelving available in four heights – 120mm, 170mm, 220mm and a 350mm vinyl-friendly 'LP' size. The colourways include satin white or natural walnut with a natural or black 12mm-thick plywood shelf, or a completely black version with high gloss supports and a 10mm-thick black glass shelf.

A four-tier glass-shelved Stax 2G weighs 35kg, while the plywood version is nearly 15kg lighter. That's quite a difference, suggesting the wooden Stax 2G adheres to the 'light but rigid' philosophy, while also providing the option of mass-loading by allowing the side supports to be filled with dry sand, for example.

Assembling a Stax 2G system is much easier than the '1G' Stax and, indeed, many other racks. Each tier is independent and stacked on the level below via vibration-damping pads on the bottom of each support. With its easily adjustable feet



ABOVE: The Blok shelf is the simplest 2G component but its leg supports are still 'mass fillable' with a damping material of your choice



(spikes or rubber 'bumper' pads can be fitted), the Stax 2G is also a doddle to level.

NO DIY REQUIRED

Once constructed, the Stax 2G rack (three levels, supports unfilled) proved a stable platform with good load bearing capabilities – I felt confident that it could be safely used to house big amplifiers up to the rated 40kg per shelf, for example. That said, the Stax 2G's 40cm shelf depth makes it more suitable for mainstream, conventionally-sized hi-fi separates anyway.

Ordinarily, my trusty Pro-Ject X2 B turntable [*HFN* Sep '22] rests on heavy furniture, separate from the electronics in a rack. Switching the deck onto the top of a Stax 2G consisting of a Base, 220mm tier and LP tier, all with plywood shelves, I re-listened to

LEFT: Stax 2G is available with a tempered glass shelf finished in black or [seen here] a modern plywood shelf, in either a natural ash or black ash veneer

the vinyl release of *Honey* [Grand Jury GJ0078-1]. To keep things simple, I left my Primare PRE35 and A35.2 amps [*HFN* Dec '19] in their place, connected to a pair of Monitor Audio Gold 300 6Gs [*HFN* Oct '24]. Most tracks on this album are subdued pieces that pivot around Samia Finnerty's vocals – there's little low bass, which is where I would expect most gains to be noted.

Nonetheless, spinning the LP up on the Stax 2G, the airy presentation appeared more natural, with an increased feel of spaciousness on songs like 'Kill Her Freak Out' and 'Pink Balloon'. The more poppy 'Mad At Me', with its '80s beat and distorted guitars, turned out to be a better opportunity for the Stax 2G to show off its isolating properties. Bass detail was that bit clearer and more detailed, a difference that was even more outspoken with the massive bass on Daft Punk's 'Motherboard' [*Random Access Memories*; Sony Music 19658773731] and 'Running' from Moderat's *III* [Monkeytown MTR064LP]. ⬇

HI-FI NEWS VERDICT

As with Monitor Audio's CI kit, a lot of practical thinking has gone into the design of the Blok 2G. A modular approach allows building a solution fit for purpose, without breaking the bank. The three colourways and contrast between shelves and supports make for a modern, but also luxurious piece of furniture. Sensible and good-looking it is, but more importantly, the 'floating' levels, the rigid supports and shelf materials make acoustic sense too.

Sound Quality: 85%

