The VRX series lineage is obvious: it’s spawned from VerTec line array series technology and is designed for smaller venues or portable sound systems where space, weight and aesthetics are important. The entire VRX Series consists of five models. High and midrange duties are handled by one of the two models: the VRX928 eight-inch line array or the VRX932LA 12-inch line array. Each is equipped with JBL’s Differential Drive woofer, which boasts high power capacity and light weight (each VRX928 and VRX932 enclosure is 12.7kg and 21.8kg, respectively).

The cabinets are designed with a Constant Curvature waveguide for maximum coverage when used in an array – they form a continuous arc as though they’re one continuous speaker. Up to six speakers can be flown for a single array or two speakers can mount on a dual-angle pole threaded directly into the accompanying subwoofer. Rigging the speakers together is accomplished via a built-in hinged bar and quick-release pins to easily lock the speakers into place; no additional hardware is needed to join the speakers together. To rig the speakers for permanent installation, the optional JBL VRX-AF array frame is available.

The back of the speakers sport switchable modes for either bi-amp’ed or passive applications. In bi-amp’ed mode, the speakers cross over at a fixed 2kHz for the VRX928 and 1.2kHz for the VRX932. In passive mode, each JBL is equipped with an Array Configuration Selector to determine the amount of ‘amplitude shaping’ for the high end. Each speaker can be externally switched to +3dB for long throw. These setting can make high frequencies more evenly distributed when using multiple speakers in an array.

There are a couple of subwoofers available: the 18-inch VRX918S and 15-inch VRX915S weighing 38.5kg and 26.3kg, respectively. VRX Series subs are equipped with rigging hardware and can be hung independently or with their corresponding line array.

There’s a wedge as well – the VRX915M; a two-way stage monitor. The monitors are equipped with a 15-inch Differential Drive woofer and four-inch diameter compression driver. These can be either bi-amp’ed or run in full range mode. It’s clear that sight lines and aesthetics were carefully considered with this design, as the monitors are just shy of 15 inches high. Daisy chaining the monitors is easy, too; each side of the monitor has a Neutrik Speakon NL-4 connector.

**BASS CAMP**

I was sent four VRX928 enclosures and four VRX915S subwoofers with satellite mounting poles. Upon unpacking the speakers I was immediately impressed with their light-weight, sleek design and obvious build quality… not to mention the generally impressive appearance – these speakers look like they mean business!

My first venture with the VRX Series was to a weeklong music camp. I decided to use the speakers for our mobile systems, which consisted of a Mackie 24:4 analogue live mixer, Crown XLS402 and XLS602 amps as well as a dbx DriveRack for system management.

The setup was about as quick as I could have hoped for. The hardware for locking the speakers together couldn’t have been
easier; the same went for mounting the threaded pole into the sub. Within minutes, the speakers were ready for audio. All VRX Series components ship with Neutrik Speakon NL-4 connections only. I was a bit disappointed they didn’t use a combo connector until I realised that there’s a good reason for the design. When in bi-amped mode, two poles of the Speakon are used for the mid, so a quarter-inch connector would surely confuse the issue due to the inherent limitation of only two connection points.

Since I didn’t have the amplification available to run the speakers in bi-amped mode, I went with a passive setup. Having two different mounting angles was great; the speakers and subs were on stage about eight feet above the ground so I was able to easily use the angled option. The satellite speaker pole is adjustable by predetermined notches, assuring the speakers are set at the exact same height on both sides of the stage.

For my purposes, the VRX’s highs and mids clearly needed some reduction, so I reduced 3kHz and 6.5kHz a few dB with additional dips from 8kHz and up. Once I looked at the frequency plot of the array it confirmed what my ears had told me: there was a frequency lift starting at around 1.5kHz. After spending a bit of time adjusting amp levels and tuning the system, the final result was very pleasing to my ear.

With the band playing, low frequency audio rounded out nicely in the subs and I was very pleased with the acoustic-driven music; everything sounded natural and present. The vocals and acoustic guitar subtly cut through the rest of the band – drums, keys and bass. To help reach the rear of the outside shelter (a 50-foot by 50-foot space) I set the top speaker on the long throw setting of +3dB and the lower speakers at –3dB. The only modification I would have preferred was a rotation of the left speakers 180 degrees, so the HF horn was on the outside of the array, matching the right side. The speakers are designed to be oriented only one way on the pole. (When the speakers are hung, this isn’t an issue).

CONCLUSION
The more I used the VRX series loudspeakers, the more I appreciated their ease of setup, durability and, most importantly, their superb sound. In a small to medium-sized venue where space is an issue, these are a great solution. From my experience, running one sub per array speaker was the best option. I wouldn’t hesitate to recommend this line to anyone with the bucks to spend.

Editor’s note: The VRX line has been supplemented by two powered cabinets – the VRX 932LAP 12-inch two way, and the VRX918SP 18-inch sub (both are pictured).