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JOHN ATKINSON

Q Acoustics 5040

LOUDSPEAKER

When I reviewed the Concept 50 loudspeaker from the UK's Q Acoustics in August 2022,[1] I concluded that the Concept 50 lowers the sweet price spot for affordable tower speakers to $3000/pair. Now I have another pair of Q Acoustics loudspeakers in the house for review. Like the earlier speaker, the 5040 is a slim, elegant-looking tower with a vertical D'Appolito drive-unit array comprising a 0.9" fabric-dome tweeter positioned between the two 5" plastic-cone woofers. But the price is half that of the Concept 50: $1499/pair. Will this be a new sweet spot? We shall see.

The 5040

Superficially, the 5040 appears identical to the Concept 50, with twin height-adjustable spikes at the front and stabilizing aluminum outriggers at the rear. But it is slightly shorter and lacks the earlier speaker's sprung base. The three drive units are mounted at the top of the High-Density Fiberboard baffle on a panel finished in black acrylic and isolated from the enclosure with a layer of butyl rubber. The enclosure is made from 18mm MDF and, as with the Concept 50, Q Acoustics has paid a lot of attention to the cabinet's vibrational behavior. Strategically placed Point-2-Point (P2P) internal bracing stiffens the cabinet to minimize low-frequency vibrations, while two tubes, called Helmholtz Pressure Equalisers (HPE), are said to reduce the effects of internal standing waves.

The proprietary drive units were developed for Q Acoustics's 5000-series models. The woofers' plastic cones are terminated with a substantial half-roll surround and feature what Q Acoustics calls a "Continuous Curve Cone" profile,[2] which doesn't have a conventional dust cap. This cone was developed using Finite Element Analysis (FEA) and is said to combine the bass-performance benefits of a traditional straight conical cone with the midrange frequency control of a flared cone while reducing harmonic distortion. The dispersion and what is described as "a well-controlled frequency response" should enable a smooth integration with the tweeter. The woofer's motor uses a substantial magnet with a near fully saturated pole piece and an aluminum ring mounted underneath the pole plate to reduce inductance-induced modulation distortion. The 30.5mm voice-coil is wound from low-mass copper-clad aluminum wire (CCAW) over a glass

1 See stereophile.com/content/q-acoustics-concept-50-loudspeaker.

2 A white paper on the technology featured in Q Acoustics's 5000-series loudspeakers can be downloaded from tinyurl.com/3c4m9du8.

SPECIFICATIONS

Description Two-way, reflex-loaded, floorstanding loudspeaker. Drive units: two 5" (125mm) impregnated-and-coated-paper–cone woofers; 1" (25mm) fabric-dome tweeter. Crossover frequency: 2.5kHz. Frequency response: 39Hz–30kHz –6dB. Nominal impedance: 6 ohms. Minimum impedance: 3.0 ohms. Sensitivity: 91.5dB/2.83V/m. Recommended amplifier power: 25–150W. Supplied accessories: foam port-blocking plugs, aluminum stabilizers, carpet-piercing spikes, and protective spike covers.
Dimensions 38.1" (967mm) H × 11.5" (293mm) W × 14.2" (361mm) D including spikes and stabilizer. Effective volume: 27l. Weight: 39.7lb (18kg) each.
Finish Satin Black, Satin White, Santos Rosewood, Holme Oak. Black acrylic trim around drive units.
Serial numbers of units reviewed QA5044 032300 114 & '012300 155. "Designed and engineered in the UK. Made in China (PRC)."
Price $1499/pair. Approximate number of US dealers: 30; also sold direct. Warranty: 4 years, extended to 5 years if purchase registered online.
Manufacturer
Q Acoustics,
Unit 2, Woodside,
Bishop's Stortford CM23 5RG,
England, UK.
Tel: (855) 279-5070.
Web: qacoustics.com.

fiber former.

The woofers are reflex-loaded with a port 11" from the floor on the speaker's rear and cross over to the tweeter at 2.5kHz. This unit was developed from the Concept series tweeter. It is hermetically sealed to prevent modulation by internal pressure variations and mechanically isolated from the front baffle. The cloth diaphragm has a narrow concave roll surround and is loaded with a shallow waveguide.

Setting up

I used my Roon Nucleus+ to feed audio data over my network to an MBL N31 CD player/DAC, which was connected first to the Musical Fidelity Nu-Vista 800.2 integrated amplifier I reviewed in the December 2023 issue, then, later, to the Audio Research I/50 integrated amplifier I reviewed in September 2023. Finally, I hooked it up to my NAD M10 integrated amplifier. The Q Acoustics 5040 has a single pair of binding posts at the bottom of the rear panel. I single-wired each speaker with AudioQuest Robin Hood cable.

With the 5040s sitting on their spikes and outriggers—protective spike covers are provided for those who have wooden floors—the tweeters were 30" from the floor, which is a few inches below my ear height. However, a D'Appolito driver array optimizes the vertical dispersion so that the tweeter-axis response is maintained a few degrees above and below that axis while floor and ceiling reflections are reduced in level. Listening to the dual-mono pink noise track on my *Editor's Choice* CD (Stereophile STPH016-2; no longer available), I didn't hear any

MEASUREMENTS

I used DRA Labs' MLSSA system, a calibrated DPA 4006 microphone, and an Earthworks microphone preamplifier to measure the Q Acoustics 5040's quasi-anechoic behavior in the farfield. (The 5040's manual doesn't mention an optimal listening axis, so I examined the farfield frequency- and time-domain responses on the tweeter axis.) I used an Earthworks QTC-40 mike for the nearfield and in-room responses and Dayton Audio's DATS V2 system to measure the impedance magnitude and electrical phase angle.

Q Acoustics specifies the 5040's voltage sensitivity as a high 91.5dB/2.83V/m. My estimate, calculated by comparing the SPL at 50" of the 5040 with that produced by a Rogers LS3/5a,[1] was within experimental error of the specified figure, at 91.7dB(B)/2.83V/m. The 5040's impedance is specified as 6 ohms, with a minimum value of 3 ohms. With the port on the rear panel sealed with the supplied foam plug, the impedance was typical of a sealed enclosure, with a relatively high tuning frequency of 69Hz. With the port open, the impedance magnitude (fig.1, solid trace) varied between 4 ohms and 13 ohms over most of the audioband, with minimum values of 3.7 ohms at 560Hz and 2.91 ohms at 8.7kHz. The electrical phase angle (dotted trace) is often high, reaching –53° at 96Hz and +37° at 1084Hz. As a result, the effective resistance, or EPDR,[2] lies below 3 ohms over much of the audioband, with minimum values of 2 ohms between 131Hz and 210Hz, 1.79 ohms at 836Hz, and 1.35 ohms at 5.8kHz. This loudspeaker is a difficult load.

When I investigated the enclosure's vibrational behavior with a plastic-tape accelerometer, I found a resonant mode at 285Hz that was present on all the panels. Its amplitude was lowest on the front baffle below the drive units and strongest on the rear panel (fig.2). This mode has a relatively high Q (quality factor) and its frequency lies between the notes C# and D in the equal-tempered scale. Both these factors will reduce the possibility of this resonance having audible consequences. (A resonance needs to be stimulated at its exact frequency by the same number of

1 Every time I measure a loudspeaker, I also measure one of my 1970s-vintage LS3/5a's to make sure that a systematic error hasn't occurred.

2 EPDR is the resistive load that gives rise to the same peak dissipation in an amplifier's output devices as the loudspeaker. See "Audio Power Amplifiers for Loudspeaker Loads," *JAES*, Vol.42 No.9, September 1994, and stereophile.com/reference/707heavy/index.html.

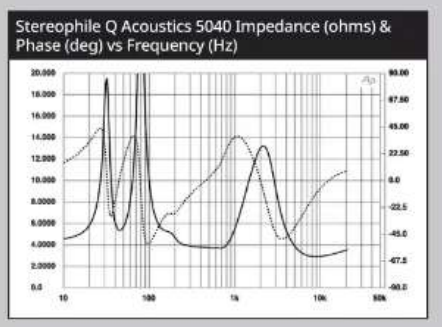

Fig.1 Q Acoustics 5040, electrical impedance (solid) and phase (dashed) with port open (2 ohms/vertical div.).

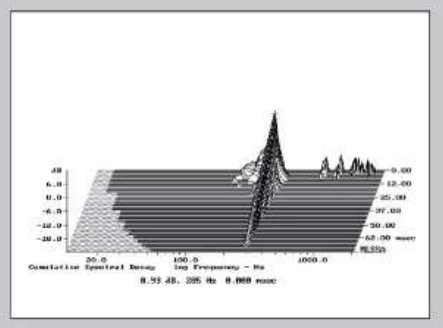

Fig.2 Q Acoustics 5040, cumulative spectral-decay plot calculated from output of accelerometer fastened to center of back panel (MLS driving voltage to speaker, 7.55V; measurement bandwidth, 2kHz).

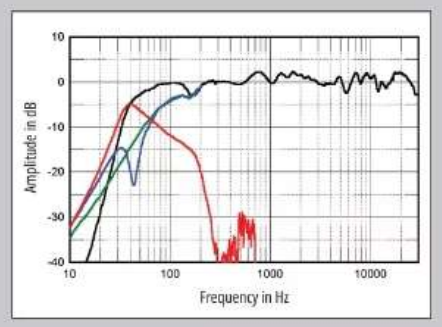

Fig.3 Q Acoustics 5040, anechoic response on tweeter axis at 50", averaged across 30° horizontal window and corrected for microphone response, with the nearfield responses of the woofers (blue), port (red), their complex sum (black), and the nearfield sealed-box woofer response (green), respectively plotted below 300Hz, 700Hz, 300Hz, and 300Hz.

significant change in tonal balance if I slouched or sat up straight. The sound started to sound a little hollow if I rose to the point where I could see the top of the enclosure.

The manual recommends that the 5040s be positioned at least 0.2m (8") from the wall behind them, 0.5m (19.7") from the sidewalls, and 2–4m (78.7"–157") apart. As with the Concept 50s, the 5040s needed to be closer to the wall behind them than was possible in my room. (This is due to a short flight of stairs behind the right-hand speaker that runs up to the vestibule.) I therefore experimented with the speaker positions to give the most even midbass and upper-bass balance. The 5040's front baffles ended up 72" from the wall behind the speakers, which were 103" apart and 47" from the nearest sidewalls, though this distance was reduced at places by bookcases and record cabinets.

The manual also says that "turning the loudspeakers slightly inwards will sharpen the stereo image at the expense of a narrower sound stage." As I am a stereo imaging fanatic,[3] I toed each speaker in to the listening position. I left off the vestigial grilles for my auditioning.

Listening

With their ports open, the 5040s reproduced the 1/3-octave warble tones on the *Editor's Choice* CD cleanly down to the 40Hz band, with the 50Hz warble a little lower in level. The 32Hz tone was reinforced by the lowest room mode, but the 25Hz and 20Hz tones were inaudible. The warble tones sounded very clean, with no "doubling" (adding second-harmonic distortion). The half-step–spaced tonebursts on *Editor's Choice* spoke cleanly down to 60Hz, with those

3 See my 1981 article on stereo imaging at stereophile.com/content/stereo-image.

measurements, continued

cycles as its Q to be fully excited.)

The two woofers behaved identically. With the port open, their response, measured in the nearfield (fig.3, blue trace), has the expected minimum-motion notch at 43Hz. The red trace in fig.3 shows the nearfield output of the port; it peaks slightly below the tuning frequency and its upper-frequency rollout is clean, with an increase in the low-pass rate above 170Hz. With the port sealed, the response of the woofers (fig.3, green trace) gently rolls off below 100Hz. Both the woofers' response and the complex sum of the woofer and port responses (fig.3, black trace below 300Hz) have a small suckout centered at 173Hz. This coincides with the frequency at which the port's rolloff increases, suggesting that some sort of internal anti-resonance is present. As with the Concept 50,[3] there is little sign of the usual peak in the midbass region due to the nearfield measurement technique, which assumes that the drive units are mounted in a true infinite baffle. The speaker's reflex alignment is therefore overdamped, which implies that the speaker will give the highest low-frequency output when it is placed relatively close to the wall behind it.

The black trace above 300Hz in fig.3 shows the 5040's quasi-anechoic farfield response, averaged across a 30° horizontal window centered on the tweeter axis and taken without the grille. The response is relatively even overall, though there is a slight shelf in the upper midrange and low treble. The pair matching between the two samples was excellent, the difference in the farfield response falling within ±0.25dB limits from 1kHz to 15kHz. The response with the grille (not shown) was very similar in the audioband, other than introducing some small, narrow suckouts between 5kHz and 10kHz. The grille also reduced the level of the slight peak at 20kHz by 2dB.

Fig.4 shows the 5040's horizontal dispersion, normalized to the response on the tweeter axis, which thus appears as a straight line. The contour lines in this graph are even, though the radiation pattern narrows slightly at the top of the woofers' passband. The dispersion is wider in the region covered by the tweeter. Fig.5 shows the speaker's dispersion in the vertical plane, again normalized to the response on the tweeter axis. The response is maintained 5° above the tweeter

3 See stereophile.com/content/q-acoustics-concept-50-loudspeaker-measurements.

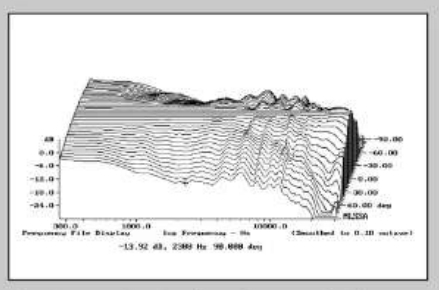

Fig.4 Q Acoustics 5040, lateral response family at 50", normalized to response on tweeter axis, from back to front: differences in response 90°–5° off axis, reference response, differences in response 5°–90° off axis.

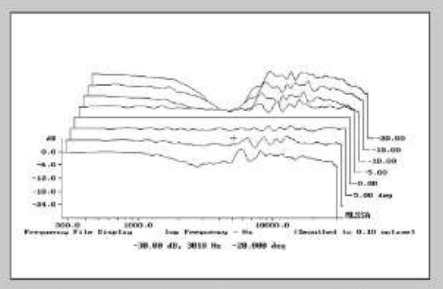

Fig.5 Q Acoustics 5040, vertical response family at 50", normalized to response on tweeter axis, from back to front: differences in response 20°–5° above axis, reference response, differences in response 5°–15° below axis.

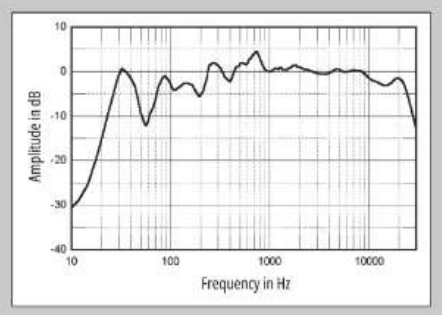

Fig.6 Q Acoustics 5040, spatially averaged, 1/6-octave response in JA's listening room.

lower in frequency suppressed a little and those between 2kHz and 4kHz slightly accentuated. Listening to the enclosure's walls with a stethoscope while the tonebursts played, I could hear a narrow band of liveliness between 250Hz and 300Hz on the rear panel. The side panels and front baffle were better behaved in this regard.

Though the 5040s were positioned farther out in my room than Q Acoustics recommends, the low frequencies had sufficient bass weight. The softly struck bass drum that punctuates Peter Gabriel's "My Body Is a Cage," from *Scratch My Back (Special Edition)* (24/48 MQA, Real World Productions/Tidal), was delivered into the room in what sounded to be full measure.

BBC Radio 3's *Night Tracks* program, streamed with Roon, alerted me to Corin, an electronica artist with whom I was completely unfamiliar. After an ambient choral beginning, the title track from her *Lux Aeterna* (24/44.1 FLAC, UIQ/Qobuz) features a sequence with high-level, low-frequency synth notes. The Q Acoustics had no problem playing this passage with sufficient authority—*not* what I was expecting from a pair of relatively inexpensive speakers with 5" woofers.

I was careful to keep the sound pressure level at the listening seat below 87dB(C), slow ballistics. These are 5" woofers, after all. Even so, the low-frequency downward sweeps on the synth on "Fit Song," from Cornelius's *Sensuous: la musique du 21e siécle* (16/44.1 ALAC file, ripped from CD, Everloving/Warner Bros. EVE016), were cleanly reproduced. And the drum samples on this track had excellent clarity.

At the other end of the spectrum, Cornelius's sampled cymbals had a little too much HF "swish." Was it the speakers? Was it the Musical Fidelity amplifier? Was it the recording? I played a track from the Jerome Harris Quintet's *Rendezvous* (16/44.1 ALAC file, STPH013-2), which I had recorded and mixed.[4] Billy Drummonds's cymbals on "Decision Point" also had a touch too much top-octave energy, more than I remember from when I listened to this track on the Q Acoustics Concept 50s and definitely more than with my reference KEF LS50s. I tried reducing the toe-in angle, as recommended in the manual, but this slightly blurred the stereo image.

As I had noted with the Concept 50s, Drummond's kickdrum and Harris's acoustic bass guitar were reproduced by the 5040s with excellent upper-bass articulation, even with the ports open. Also like the Concept 50s, the 5040s offered impressive clarity and excelled when it came to stereo-imaging accuracy. The dual-mono pink noise track on *Editor's Choice* was reproduced as a narrow, stable central image, with no splashing to the sides at any frequency and only some slight "vertical venetian blind" effect (comb filtering) as I moved my head from side to side. The soundstage on *Borders*, a new album of orchestral works by Norwegian composer

4 This CD is out of print but the files can be downloaded or streamed from jeromeharris.bandcamp.com/album/rendezvous.

measurements, continued

axis, which is useful considering that the tweeter is 30" from the floor. A suckout starts to develop in the crossover region 10° above the reference axis.

Fig.6 shows the Q Acoustics 5040s' spatially averaged response[4] in my room with their ports open and without the grilles. The response is reasonably even above 230Hz, though with a slight excess of energy in the upper midrange. There is insufficient upper- and midbass energy due, presumably, to the fact that I wasn't able to move the speakers as close to the wall behind them as necessary. Instead of the in-room response gently sloping down above 3kHz, which will be due to the increased absorption of the room's furnishings as the frequency increases, the 5040s' response remains at full level up to 9kHz.

For reference, the red trace in fig.7 repeats the spatially averaged response of the 5040s and adds that of the Q Acoustics Concept 50s (blue trace) and that of my long-term reference KEF LS50s (green trace). The two Q Acoustics speakers have a very similar in-room response in the bass, where the two models excite the lowest-frequency mode in my room to the same extent, and the midrange. However, the 5040s' spatially averaged response has more energy above 5kHz, while the Concept 50s' response was almost identical to that of the KEFs in this region.

In the time domain, the 5040's step response (fig.8) indicates that the three drive units are connected in positive acoustic polarity. The decay of the tweeter's step, which arrives first at the microphone, blends smoothly with the start of the woofers' step, which implies optimal crossover implementation. The 5040's cumulative spectral-decay plot on the tweeter axis (fig.9) features a clean initial decay. (As always, ignore the apparent low-level ridge of delayed energy just below 16kHz, which is due to interference from the MLSSA host PC's video circuitry.)

The Q Acoustics 5040 offers generally excellent measured performance. However, that demanding impedance might make amplifier choice problematic, and the extended high frequencies will mean experimentation with toe-in might be necessary to optimize the speakers' treble balance.—**John Atkinson**

4 Using the FuzzMeasure 3.0 program, a Metric Halo MIO2882 FireWire-connected audio interface, and a 96kHz sample rate, I average 20 1/6-octave–smoothed spectra, individually taken for the left and right speakers, in a rectangular grid 36" wide × 18" high and centered on the positions of my ears.

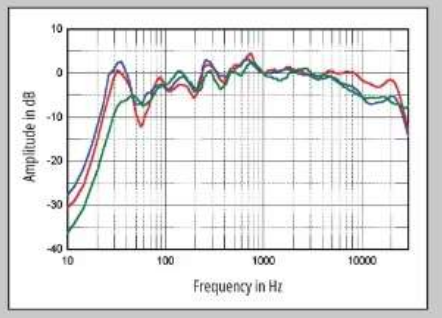

Fig.7 Q Acoustics 5040, spatially averaged, 1/6-octave response in JA's listening room (red), the Q Acoustics Concept 50 (blue), and of the KEF LS50 (green).

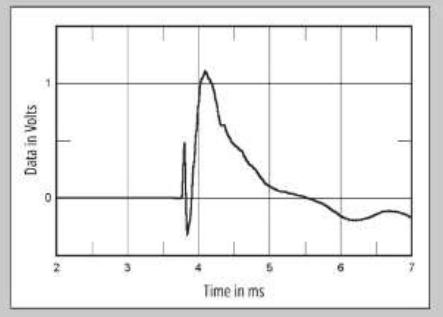

Fig.8 Q Acoustics 5040, step response on tweeter axis at 50" (5ms time window, 30kHz bandwidth).

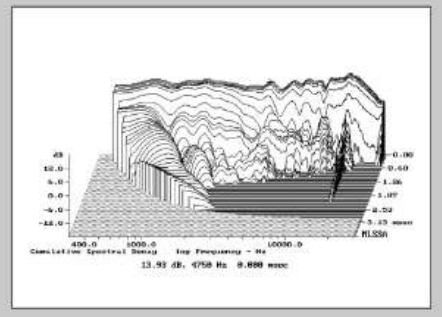

Fig.9 Q Acoustics 5040, cumulative spectral-decay plot on tweeter axis at 50" (0.15ms risetime).

Henning Sommerro performed by the Trondheim Symphony Orchestra and conducted by Nick Davies (24/352.8 MQA, 2L 2L-173-SABD), was stable, wide, and deep. More significantly, the images of the individual instruments were superbly well-focused. The solo harmonica in the three movements of *Solkverv* (Solstice) was appropriately small. (Too many orchestral recordings exaggerate the size and loudness of the solo instrument—I am looking at you, Jascha Heifetz.)

It was time to return the Musical Fidelity amplifier to the distributor, so I replaced it with the Audio Research I/50 integrated amplifier. I used the I/50's 4 ohm output transformer taps, as I was already aware that the 5040 was a current-hungry load. (See the Measurements sidebar.) I played the Jerome Harris track again. The sound was sweeter than it had been with the Musical Fidelity—in fact it was *too* sweet. I measured the frequency response of one of the speakers while it was driven by the Audio Research and found that the 5040's output in the top octave was attenuated up to 5dB compared with the Nu-Vista 800.2. This was due to the fact that the I/50's output impedance rises to 2.3 ohms in the top octave and the Q Acoustics's impedance in the same region drops to 3 ohms.

Yes, the treble balance sounded overly sweet with this amplifier, but the Q Acoustics speaker's midrange was still impressively transparent. I played Mike Garson's arrangement of Miles Davis's "All Blues" from *Jazz Hat* (16/44.1 FLAC, Reference Recordings/Qobuz). Garson's piano sounded uncolored, though projected slightly forward in the soundstage. I confirmed this behavior with one of my own piano recordings, Robert Silverman performing Liszt's *Liebestraum* (16/44.1 ALAC, Stereophile STPH-008-2). Silverman's Steinway was superbly articulate, though its image was indeed more forward than I am used to, with some upper midrange notes slightly emphasized.

Nevertheless, the midrange reproduction and imaging precision of the Audio Research/Q Acoustics combo was addictive. The images of the vocal soloists on Eriks Esenvalds's "Translations," from the album of the same name from the Portland State Chamber Choir (24/96 WAV, Naxos), was palpable, and the wordless choral vocals that surround the solo singers were set well behind them.

I switched out the Audio Research for my NAD M10 integrated amplifier, using the NAD's own D/A stage rather than the MBL digital processor. The 5040's top octaves no longer sounded overly sweet, but they were not quite as emphasized as they had been with the Musical Fidelity Nu-Vista. Without the Nu-Vista's iron-fisted control of the speaker's low frequencies, bass instruments didn't sound quite as articulate, though they still had good weight as long as I didn't set the volume too high.

Listening to the Jerome Harris Quintet's *Rendezvous* reminded me that Art Baron, the trombonist on this album, had also been featured on "Love Having You Around" from Stevie Wonder's *Music of My Mind* (Motown). I finished my auditioning of the Q Acoustics 5040s by streaming *Music of My Mind* in 24/192 resolution from Qobuz, sticking with the NAD amplifier. The synth bass line was evenly balanced, the cymbals didn't sound too hot, Wonder's multitracked vocals were compelling, and when Art Baron's blatty-sounding 'bone takes flight around the 5-minute mark, the Q Acoustics 5040s transported me back 50 years to when this groundbreaking album was in heavy rotation *chez* Atkinson.

ASSOCIATED EQUIPMENT

Digital sources Roon Nucleus+ file server; Ayre Acoustics C-5xe^{MP} universal player; MBL N31 CD player/DAC; Ayre Acoustics QA-9 A/D converter; NetGear Nighthawk router.
Integrated amplifiers Audio Research I/50, Musical Fidelity Nu-Vista 800.2, NAD M10.
Power amplifiers Parasound Halo JC 1+ monoblocks.
Loudspeakers KEF LS50.
Cables Digital: AudioQuest Vodka (Ethernet), AudioQuest Coffee (USB), DH Labs (1m, AES3). Interconnect: Ayre/Cardas (balanced). Speaker: AudioQuest Robin Hood. AC: AudioQuest Dragon Source & High Current, manufacturers' own.
Accessories Target TT-5 equipment racks, Ayre Acoustics Myrtle Blocks; ASC Tube Traps, RPG Abffusor panels; AudioQuest Niagara 5000 Low-Z Power/Noise-Dissipation System (amplifiers) and AudioQuest Niagara 1000 Low-Z Power/Noise-Dissipation System (source components). AudioQuest Fog Lifters cable supports. AC power comes from two dedicated 20A circuits, each just 6' from breaker box.
Room 20' (left side), 25' (right side) × 16' × 8'.—**John Atkinson**

Conclusion

I wasn't sure what to expect from the Q Acoustics 5040. Other than the GoldenEar BRX, which costs $1900/pair, and the KEF LS50 Meta, which costs $1599.99/pair, the 5040 is the least expensive speaker I have reviewed in more than four years. The Q Acoustics is a tower speaker while those other two are standmounts, which means the cost of a pair of good-quality stands needs to be added to their prices. But even without taking its affordable price into consideration, Q Acoustics's 5040 offers superb sound quality. It combines sufficient low-frequency extension and articulation with excellent clarity and imaging and low coloration. As the 5040 won't play deafeningly loudly, it will work best in smallish to medium-sized rooms, and amplifier choice will be critical in getting the best from this speaker. Highly recommended. ■

MANUFACTURERS' COMMENTS

THIS ISSUE: Representatives of Mobile Fidelity, Q Acoustics, Naim, and Plinius respond to our reviews of their products.

Mobile Fidelity Electronics MasterPhono

Following a hugely successful AXPONA 2023 show, we were elated when Herb Reichert requested a MoFi MasterPhono for his Gramophone Dreams column. What could be better than a master storyteller like HR getting his hands on MoFi Electronics's new statement product? The MasterPhono is a highly complex component that requires patience to fully comprehend and "dial in" to achieve maximum performance from one's phono cartridge(s), which makes it perfect for the Gramophone Dreams column. We would like to take this opportunity to further clarify a few aspects of HR's excellent and thorough editorial.

The included, sculpted-aluminum remote control does indeed do a whole lot more than turn the meter lights on and off. Adjustments to cartridge loading, gain, mode (Stereo/Mono), and subsonic filtering are all facilitated via the remote. Being able to easily and accurately dial in your phono cartridge from the comfort of your listening position is a convenience that cannot be overstated. Once you try it, there's simply no going back. Most listeners will find this invaluable.

The latest software update, version 1.4.3, allows for a new TEST MODE 3, using the HiFi News Test Record (HFN001) to achieve proper azimuth setup, exactly like TEST MODE 2 using the Analogue Productions AAPT1 disc.

We appreciate Herb's comments on the performance of the "current input" using the Dynavector XX2 MKII, which is no doubt an excellent cartridge. The transition range where the "current input" should be used vs the "voltage input" is suggested as 10 ohms. This is not a hard number but a broad area that requires experimentation. We have compared many cartridges with the two inputs and concluded that for current input, lower is better. As you get down to the 1–2 ohm range (My Sonic Labs or Lyra Atlas λ Lambda products), "current input" becomes a definitive improvement. Experiment to find the best results.

If you are ready for a phono stage of this caliber, we strongly suggest you look to the MoFi Electronics MasterPhono first.

Peter Madnick,
Senior Product Development Engineer
Lionel Goodfield,
PR/Marketing Consultant
MoFi Distribution

Q Acoustics 5040

Q Acoustics has always set out to provide great value with our products, and we're delighted that John has recognized this, first with the Concept 50 and now the 5040 from our all-new 5000 Series. It's refreshing in this decade to see such a thorough and detailed review, both in measurement and performance, and that the 5040 matches and lives up to its superior specifications. To simply say that the 5040 "offers superb sound quality" is an accolade indeed, which we greatly appreciate, especially when coming from such a respected source. A warm thank you to John and all at *Stereophile* for featuring us.

Alex Munro, Brand Director
Q Acoustics

Naim NSC 222 and NPX 300

The NSC 222 is more than simply the successor to the NAC-N 272; it has become our benchmark for high-quality preamplifiers with built-in streamers. NSC 222 delivers audiophile performance across ancillary source components, including high-quality moving magnet–equipped record players, with of course the streaming section worthy of the most discerning music listeners.

The solid backbone to all Naim components is the power supply. The NPX

300 offers the best performance to Naim source components and preamplifier. The addition of a better external power supply to the NSC 222 delivers its full potential, elevating it to greater heights of musical performance. Power supplies never cease to amaze and will remain a key player in our range of products.

Jason Gould, Brand Ambassador
Naim Audio

Plinius Reference A-150

I would like to thank the *Stereophile* team, with kudos to Jason Victor Serinus, Jim Austin, and John Atkinson for their professionalism on this project. Because of the wide price range of products that come under review, placing an amplifier in the $15,000 price range against higher priced models can be difficult. While I can appreciate Jason's vast experience with many high-priced models and how these products interact with the Wilson Alexia V, overall, the RA-150 fared very well, especially when used in a monoblock configuration. I liken the listening experience to driving a high-performance Ferrari, then driving a modern family sedan. The Ferrari is light-years ahead in all aspects of acceleration, handling, and braking, but today's sedans are very acceptable especially when value is considered. The Plinius Reference A-150 excels against many of its competitors in its price range. I personally interact with many current Plinius customers who own prior SA Class-A models, the predecessor to the RA series, and are very happy with the performance of these products. My own system consists of a pair of Vienna Acoustics Haydn Signature speakers and the RA-150, which brings me immense listening joy and pleasure. (Yes, I'm biased.) One could spend a lot more on a system, but how much more audio pleasure would one experience for the money? I understand that audio excellence is the goal of the audiophile world, but value is also an important consideration.

The Reference A-300 may be an even better match when paired with the Alexia V. Hopefully, I can work with the *Stereophile* team on a review of this model in the future. In the meantime, I am pleased that we can offer the Plinius RA-150 as an excellent value alternative to the average audiophile.

Ralph Abramo
Plinius Audio US Distributor