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Q Acoustics 3020c

DETAILS

PRODUCT
Q Acoustics 3020c

PRICE
£400

ORIGIN
UK/China

TYPE
Standmount loudspeaker

WEIGHT
5.5kg

DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
175 x 279 x 281mm

FEATURES
- 22mm silk dome tweeter
- 120mm 'CCC' mid/bass driver
- Quoted sensitivity: 87dB/1W/1m (6ohm)

DISTRIBUTOR
Armour Home Electronics

WEBSITE
qacoustics.co.uk
armourhome.co.uk

REVIEWED
HFC 524

On recent years, Q Acoustics has been systematically fleshing out its range so that it now stretches evenly into the thousands of pounds bracket, but it has now returned to the segment that it built its reputation on. The 3000C models replace the 3000i range; the company has decided against changing the number again, presumably to maintain the gap to the 5000 models.

The 3020c is the middle of three standmounts and represents a £100 price jump over the outgoing 3020i (*HFC* 441). The basic layout and dimensions of the cabinet are unchanged, but you do gain some useful refinements for the extra cash. In a change to the preceding model, the tweeter is hermetically sealed. It's a 22mm unit that follows a classic Q Acoustics pattern of a soft dome tweeter that features a prominent outer roll to it. The company has also bolstered the isolation behind the baffle and lowered the crossover point, but otherwise left it as is. The driver it crosses over to is all new, however. It is a variation on the Continuous Curve Cone (C^3) that we first saw in the 5000 Series. As the name suggests, this cone dispenses with the centre dust cap and uses a specially calculated curve that merges the benefits of a traditional straight conic cone with the high/midrange frequency control of a flared cone. In the 3020c it's 120mm across and is augmented by a rear-firing bass port.

There's a spacious presentation considering this is a fairly small speaker

The cabinet follows principles that were adhered to in the 3000i models and augmented in the 5000 Series. This means there is no constrained layer damping involved, but the cabinet itself is a fairly solid object with its distinctive radius edges and relatively deep profile. This shape, combined with the narrow footprint of the 3020c means that the optional £175 stand that Q Acoustics offers is likely to be a decent purchase.

Even allowing for the higher price point that the 3020c contests, the level of fit and finish on show here is entirely in keeping with the competition it finds itself arranged against. Four finishes are offered; two wood effect laminates together with White or Graphite. A prominent trim ring helps to make the front panel look a little more interesting but, in the grey finish especially, it's still a fairly subdued piece of design. You do get magnetically secured grilles as standard, though, and details like the bespoke speaker terminals are nicer than on some rivals at many multiples the price.

Sound quality

The single most important thing that the newest iteration of the 3020 does is not regress over anything that its predecessors did so well. There may not be a gelcore cabinet in use here but, so long as the 3020c is placed with a gentle level of toe-in relative to our listening position a little over 2m away, it vanishes very effectively from the soundstage it creates. It's a usefully spacious presentation too considering that this is a fairly small

speaker. Fink's *Beauty In Your Wake* has the space it needs for the surprisingly complex presentations to open out and reveal the speaker's hidden depths.

There is also more bass on offer than the stated 60Hz lower roll-off might suggest is possible. The remarkable *Vakler* by Svaneborg falters slightly is at the top end. The 5020's more sophisticated tweeter conspires to be both more detailed and demonstrate a little more sparkle with Public Service Broadcasting's rather lovely *The Last Flight*. The more expensive speaker continues to justify its existence even though the 3020c can push it close.

The 3020c is more than capable of keeping the more costly 5020 honest

Kardyb is delivered with far more low-end heft than you might expect while all the time managing to stay on top of the dizzying flurry of drum beats. Really lean on the Q Acoustics and some of the composure begins to wilt, but you have to be deeply unsympathetic to achieve it.

In fact, the 3020c is more than capable of keeping the more expensive 5020 (*HFC* 502) honest. Both speakers have genuinely convincing tonality and excellent cohesion across their two drivers. Where the more affordable model

Details like the bespoke speaker terminals are nicer than on some rivals at many multiples the price

Conclusion

Crucially, though, the 3020c does enough to sit in the £400 speaker category like it belongs there rather than because inflation has pushed it there against its will. The detail changes that Q Acoustics has made to its long-running budget champ are good enough to ensure that it still delivers a huge chunk of easily exploitable, user friendly performance at a wholly sane price point. It might have been busy towards the higher end, but Q Acoustics still knows how to cut it at the entry level. ***ES***

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY ★★★★½

VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★½

BUILD QUALITY ★★★★★

EASE OF DRIVE ★★★★★

LIKE: Spacious, forgiving and punchy; build; easy to partner

DISLIKE: Some limits at frequency extremes; not the most exciting looking speaker going

WE SAY: A class act that takes the 3000 concept and continues to improve it

OVERALL ★★★★½