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UK £5.99
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Two-way reflex-loaded floorstanding loudspeaker
Made by: Q Acoustics (Armour Home Electronics)
Supplied by: Armour Home Electronics Ltd, Herts, UK
Telephone: 01279 501111
Web: www.qacoustics.co.uk; www.armourhome.co.uk
Price: £849

Q Acoustics 3050c

Flagship floorstander of Q Acoustics' 3000c series leverages premier-range tech into a sub-£1000 enclosure
Review: **Jamie Biesemans** Lab: **Paul Miller**

Employing a deal of trickle-down technology from its costlier models, the 3050c is the only floorstander in Q Acoustics' new 3000c range. Following on from its popular 3000i series, the basics remain the same – slim speakers that look and sound good, with price tags that won't break the bank. The 3050c tower tested here differs from the 3010c, 3020c and 3030c standmount models not only in size, but also with its dual 142mm woofer/mid units, promising bigger bass and more thrills at what seems an extremely generous £849 price tag.

PIN SHARP

I'm always impressed by the build quality of Q Acoustics' loudspeakers. While you shouldn't expect high-gloss paint jobs with multiple layers of varnish or exotic veneers at this level, the company applies a seamless finish to the curved cabinet shape that has become its trademark.

The Pin Oak version of the 3050c seen here is especially handsome, more so to these eyes than the lighter oak finish on the more expensive 5050 [*HFN* Jun '24]. There are four colourways in total, with a Claro Walnut offered alongside Satin Black and Satin White for those seeking a more modern look. Removing the magnetically attached grille from the top half of the baffle is optional, as these don't significantly impact sound quality [see PM's Lab Report, p71].

Partly because of their limited width, and partly due to the curved cabinets, these speakers are not visually overbearing – possibly making them more acceptable in living rooms otherwise declared off-limits to large loudspeakers. However, the svelte profile does require extra support to ensure curious children or daft dogs don't push them over. Q Acoustics has a smart solution that doesn't disrupt the illusion of slenderness, supplying outriggers that are fitted to the rear of the floorstanding cabinet. Spikes are included, as are rubber tips to avoid damaging wooden floors.

> 'No history of Abbey Road can ignore The Beatles'

Even with its affordable ethos, the 3050c is reminiscent of the Concept 500 floorstander [*HFN* Jul '17], which was designed by Karl-Heinz Fink for Q Acoustics' foray into a more premium market, and has served as inspiration for subsequent projects. That includes the drive to achieve 'vibration-free' cabinets. In this case, as the 3050c is built to a tight budget, it lacks the 'gelcore' multilayer construction and multiple Helmholtz Pressure Equalisers used in the brand's more expensive models. But Q Acoustics does manage to offer some alternatives [see PM's boxout, p69].

Adapted from the Concept line, the 22mm tweeter, situated between the two bass/mid units in a D'Appolito configuration, is retained within its own hermetically sealed housing. It's also mechanically decoupled from the baffle, reducing the transfer of vibrations to the cabinet. There's also a very broad surround encircling the soft dome driver, a gentle waveguide designed to optimise the off-axis HF response [again, see PM's Lab Report, p71].

CUSTOM CONES

The in-house developed C^3 bass/mid driver featured on the 3050c is derived from those used in the 5000 series. Once again, computer simulations, prototyping and the efforts of a 'multi-disciplinary team research project' have resulted in a driver cone profile that provides a good compromise between 'flat' (good for bass) and deeply conical (arguably better for mid frequencies). The team has hit upon a continuously curved cone profile that, it claims, optimises dispersion over a wide frequency range while avoiding aggressive

RIGHT: Two 142mm C^3 bass/mid units are combined with a 22mm soft dome tweeter in a classic MTM array. Braced cabinet is offered in a choice of Satin Black, Satin White, Pin Oak (light) and Claro Walnut (dark) finishes and is stabilised by corner outriggers with spikes

RESONANCE CONTROL

Q Acoustics' costlier cabinets [*HFN* Apr '22] employ three distinct techniques to deal with their drivers' unwanted kinetic energy (vibration). One is the constrained-layer cabinet – a sandwich construction with a compliant gel filling that damps out higher-frequency cabinet vibrations as heat. That's simply too costly for the 3050c which employs single-skin 16mm MDF for the cabinet walls and thicker 25mm HDF for the baffle. However, the remaining two energy mitigations are retained in the 3050c. One is Q Acoustics' point-to-point (P2P) bracing, connecting and stiffening the sidewalls of the cabinet at critical locations rather than use a full-width 'shelf' bracing that might bring additional modes into play [see cutaway pic, right].

The second resonance-controlling bullet in the 3050c's armoury is a Helmholtz Pressure Equaliser (HPE). This long tube, mounted vertically inside the back of the enclosure, is tuned to attenuate the fundamental length resonance by normalising the pressure gradient between the top and bottom spaces of its 42-litre cabinet. A mode was detected at 860Hz during our lab tests [see p71] but at a full –18dB down, relative to the main port output, this suggests that Q Acoustics' efforts in scaling down a cost-effective version of HPE – using one rather than two internal tubes – has been successful here. PM

breakup modes. However, the profile is adapted for different cone diameters, so the 3050c's C³ driver is not simply a larger version of those seen on the 3010 and 3020 models.

BALANCING ACT

Just as Q Acoustics' industrial design is generally consistent, so is the brand's 'sound signature'. Listening to the 3050c speakers, driven by a moderately priced system comprising a Primare I15 integrated amplifier [*HFN* Oct '18] and WiiM Ultra streamer, the performance was even-handed and balanced, with a slight touch of warmth in the midrange. It made for a pleasant, relaxing listen, but not *too* laidback – these speakers convey speed and rhythm well, aided by a robust low end that doesn't show any flabbiness. There's a tightness to the sound that reaps rewards with electronic music and up-tempo rock.

Positioned parallel with the side walls, the 3050cs – not particularly tall at just over 1m – filled the room nicely, giving a broad, enveloping performance suited to settings with multiple listening positions. That said, if you are seeking critical listening with more depth to the soundstage, some toe-in is recommended. A minimum distance from the rear wall of 20cm is also suggested, but there's the option of shorting the speaker's rear bass-reflex port, with a supplied foam bung, if you feel the need to manage the bass response.

I ran the 3050c pair with ports 'open', and their low-end poise and speed came to the fore with Wagner's 'Die Walküre' on *LSO At The Movies* [LSO 0822231511267] streamed via Roon [see p72]. From the opening strings, quickly joined by those iconic horns, there was a good sense of this piece's majestic nature, while the smooth delivery of Q Acoustics' soft dome tweeters kept the horns from sounding shrill.

SYMPHONIC SOUNDS

Even more stirring was the handling of the choral portions of the 'Ode To Joy' sequence from Beethoven's Ninth symphony. This piece is included in the LSO collection because of Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange*, but hearing it firing out of the 3050c in spectacular fashion reminded me how omnipresent it is in all kinds of media. This delivery of Beethoven's mass of voices and stabs of brass was fittingly epic, and to hear the speakers effortlessly capture the glorious *prestissimo* finale was riveting. Perhaps best of all, Q Acoustics' speakers conveyed the gleeful exuberance of the LSO performance.

While not as famous as some of her occasional collaborators, including indie rock darlings Calexico, singer-songwriter Jenny Toomey should be on anyone's ⇨

playlist if they have a passion for the 'Americana' music genre. With 'Baby Would It Matter', from her 2001 set *Antidote* [Misra MSR 010], the 3050c gave a very intimate portrayal of the languid vocal and softly struck drums, matching the personal nature of the song.

The speakers' balanced approach meant she did appear slightly recessed, and the same was true of her cover of Curtis Mayfield's 'Fool For You'. But on other tracks, including the dirge-like 'Fall On Me' and the summery 'Patsy Cline', all was fine, her vocals regaining prominence. Still, sending particular elements to the foreground, and emphasising the treble, is not really what the 3050cs (or many other Q Acoustics models) are about.

LEFT: Single 4mm binding posts are offered as the 2.4kHz crossover is not split. If used near a rear wall, the 3050c's large reflex port may be partially shorted using the supplied foam bungs

Historically, the manufacturer has positioned its loudspeakers as being well suited to both music and TV audio, which is logical enough – a good musical performance should always translate into other areas. It's also conceivable that the keenly priced 3050c will find use with the growing number of affordable, HDMI-equipped stereo amplifiers, *aka* 'soundbar killers'. Viewing the *Abbey Road: If These Walls Could Sing* documentary [Apple TV], they brought their fulsome, well-scaled sound to the myriad excerpts from classic songs, while crisply resolving sound bites from the likes of George Martin and Paul McCartney.

LIFE'S GOOD

Of course, no history of the best-known recording studio in the world can ignore The Beatles, and here there's a fascinating recollection of the genesis of 'A Day In The Life'. Playing that song through WiiM's streamer [*Sgt. Pepper's...*; UMC; 96kHz/24-bit] gave an all-in-one view of the 3050c's talents. The differences in Lennon and McCartney's vocals were distinct, just as the strummed acoustic guitar chords in the intro were richly defined. Then came the layered crescendo where piano and orchestra do battle and the soundstage swells. Q Acoustics' 'budget' speaker seemed to revel in proving it was up to the task.

HI-FI NEWS VERDICT

Building an affordable speaker that performs well is about mastering the art of compromise. While that word might suggest imperfection, Q Acoustics' 3050c floorstander demonstrates that making right choices and applying the right technology can lead to a very impressive result. This speaker offers an engaging, room-filling sound, plus elegant looks and excellent build quality, for a very reasonable price.

Sound Quality: 88%

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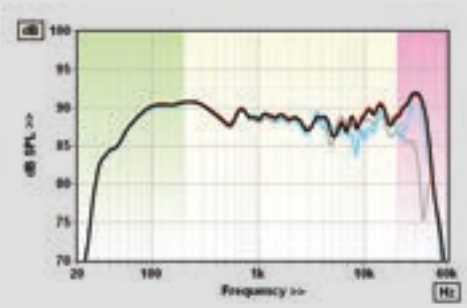
LAB REPORT

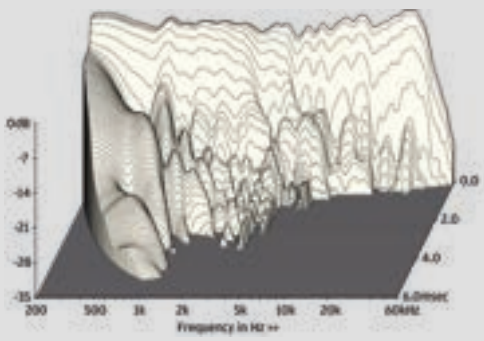
Q ACOUSTICS 3050C

This budget floorstander has a flatter forward response [Graph 1] than its costlier 5050 cousin [*HFN* Jun '24], trading the latter's presence band dip and ±4.5dB response error for just ±2.1dB and ±2.15dB, respectively, here. The response trend is slightly U-shaped (BBC-esque) with a small notch at 500-600Hz and a rising treble that offers a 42kHz extension (–6dB re. 10kHz), bettering many high-end speakers equipped with metal domes [*HFN* May '25]. A more uniform high treble is achieved by toeing-in the 3050cs by 10-15° [grey trace], at the expense of a 4dB dip at 4-5kHz, while diffraction effects from the magnetically attached grille bring a further disruption to the response above 7kHz [blue trace]. Pair matching is an astonishingly tight 0.5dB (200Hz-20kHz) and tighter still at 0.35dB from 200Hz-10kHz – this is state-of-the-art quality control!

The minor 'wiggles' in response are also reflected in numerous low-level resonances in the 142mm C³ bass/mid cones [see CSD waterfall, Graph 2] just as the powerful 32Hz port tuning also exposes minor 860Hz and 1575Hz quaterwave/tube modes [see boxout, p69]. Nevertheless, with the woofers' matched 55-750Hz (–6dB) bandwidth(s), the port tuning allows the 3050c to develop a respectable 44Hz bass extension (–6dB re. 200Hz). Otherwise, Q Acoustics' rated 90dB sensitivity for the 3050c is, on test, closer to a lower 88.5dB/1kHz (and 88.4dB across 500Hz-8kHz) but then neither is this speaker quite as tough to drive as the brand's bigger/higher sensitivity models. The minimum impedance is 3.7ohm/221Hz while a –59° dip in phase angle at 80Hz feeds a 1.75ohm EPDR at 103Hz. **PM**



ABOVE: Response inc. nearfield summed drivers/port [green], freefield corrected to 1m at 2.83V [yellow], ultrasonic [pink]. L, blk; R, red; grille, blue; ±15°, grey



ABOVE: Cabinet is not as inert as QA's constrained-layer models. Modes in the C³ drivers appear at 2-5kHz

HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Sensitivity (SPL/1m/2.83V – 1kHz/Mean/IEC)	88.5dB / 88.4dB / 87.1dB
Impedance modulus: minimum & maximum (20Hz–20kHz)	3.7ohm @ 221Hz 33.2ohm @ 68Hz
Impedance phase: minimum & maximum (20Hz–20kHz)	–59° @ 80Hz +45° @ 521Hz
Pair matching/Resp. error (200Hz–20kHz)	0.5dB/ ±2.1dB/±2.15dB
LF/HF extension (–6dB ref 200Hz/10kHz)	44Hz / 41.5kHz/42.3kHz
THD 100Hz/1kHz/10kHz (for 90dB SPL/1m)	0.55% / 0.15% / 0.9%
Dimensions (HWD, inc stabiliser) / **Weight**	1021x315x316mm / 18kg