Q Acoustics 3050c loudspeaker

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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.

Above: *Two 142mm C³ 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*

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.

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 .

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 .

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 breakup modes. However, the profile is adapted for different cone diameters, so the 3050c's C^3 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. 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.

Above: *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*

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.

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%