

Q Acoustics 5020

When it comes to range development, Q Acoustics has taken a different path to most other 'new' (as the company's 20th anniversary is now within sight, this is a relative term) loudspeaker brands. Having established itself as a formidable force in the budget sector, it then proceeded to produce the Concept 500 and 300 (HFC 426 and 448) at a considerably higher price, leaving a substantial gap between the ranges that existed for many years. Only with

the launch of the Concept 30 and 50 (HFC 491) did this gap start to close. Now the 5000 Series has arrived to give the company models that extend in an unbroken fashion all the way from £250 to £4,600.

Tellingly, the 5000 Series is not a 'Concept' range and the lineup has more in common with the 3000i models below it. The 5020 is the larger of two standmounts and the basic dimensions are extremely similar to the 3020i (HFC 441). This perception is enhanced when the

DETAILS

PRODUCT
Q Acoustics 5020
PRICE
£600
ORIGIN
UK/China
WEIGHT
7kg
DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
180 x 284 x 293mm
FEATURES
• 25mm silk dome tweeter
• 125mm CCC mid/bass driver
• Quoted sensitivity: 87dB/1W/1m (60hm)
DISTRIBUTOR
Armour Home Electronics
WEBSITE
qacoustics.co.uk
armourhome.co.uk
REVIEWED
HFC 502



cabinet is examined. Like its more affordable brethren, the 5020 makes do without the multi-layered 'gelcore' system of the Concept series. Even with 'only' a single layer of MDF, the 5020 is still a stout-feeling speaker thanks to the use of 'P2P' peer-to-peer bracing (measuring where a brace needs to be placed rather than it being put where convenient).

Where the 5020 really stands out from the lesser models is the driver arrangement. The 25mm tweeter is related to the one that first appeared in the Concept 30 and 50. It uses a silk dome that does away with the prominent roll on the smaller speakers. The driver is mechanically isolated from the front panel and is placed in its own hermetically sealed chamber, the combination of which minimises interference.

The partnering 125mm mid/bass driver is all new. Called the CCC (Continuous Curved Cone), it is the first from Q Acoustics to eschew any form of central dust cap. The shape of the driver is the result of extensive testing and begins with a true hemispherical profile. Over the course of multiple prototypes – all of which underwent a battery of tests – the profile was altered to combine multiple radii into a single smooth curve.

The 5020 delivers a wide spread of content in a wholly engaging way

Q Acoustics says the result is a step forward over all of its preceding mid/bass drivers, claiming that everything from the dispersion to the resistance and standing waves are improved. To take full advantage of this, the mount and motor assembly – while recognisably similar to before – have also been updated. The crossover that ties the two drivers together is in keeping with traditional Q Acoustics design practise, but does without the complex 'raft mount' arrangement of the more expensive models. The handover is 2.5kHz.

Aesthetically, the 5020 has an intriguing cabinet that grows on me during the time I spend with it. The basics of the design are closer to the 3000i range than the Concept, but it looks and feels like the more premium speaker it is. Much of this is down to the use of a clearly defined front baffle in black, which complements the drivers and provides a contrast to the rest of the cabinet. Not for the first time, I find myself thinking that

the white finish works best against that contrasting baffle, but this is a good-looking speaker in all the available finishes.

Sound quality

Given that the 5020 does not share the Gelcore cabinet of the Concept 30, it is intriguing that one feature it possesses is almost identical. Like its more expensive sibling, the 5020 is not a 'plonk-and-play' speaker. Some care must be taken in terms of positioning and toe-in for it to deliver what it is capable of. It's well worth the effort, though, as it has the same uncanny ability to disappear from the soundstage it creates so long as a little care and attention is put in.

The effect this has on everything that the 5020 does cannot be underestimated. The gentle *No Ptery* by Gary Jules arrives at the listening position as a fully formed musical image without much in the sense of two points of origin of sound. It's a skill that Q Acoustics has been carefully honing since the original Concept models and even some impressive options at the same sort of price cannot easily match it. It serves to amplify the other talents that the 5020 has very effectively.

These are considerable too. The new and sophisticated CCC midrange does not interfere with the neutral presentation of the standmount. The sumptuous big-band sound of Kamasi Washington's *Humility* is entirely convincing, both in the sense of each band section being tonally



The 5020 is £100 cheaper than the diminutive Sonus faber Lumina 1 (HFC 477), but thanks to the Italian speaker's long-throw mid/bass and clever bass port, their posted figures are very similar. The Lumina 1 is more engaging – where the 5020 is lively, the Lumina 1 is out-and-out fun. But the sheer ability of the 5020 to vanish into the soundstage it creates is something that the Sonus faber cannot easily match. The Lumina 1 is more sensitive and easy to place, though. Ultimately, both are excellent speakers but the sheer even handedness and transparency of the Q Acoustics means it really has the upper hand.



believable, but also because there is the consistent sense of individual performers making up the overall sound. Across a wide selection of voices and instruments, the 5020 sounds unforced and believable.

Of course, this is still a relatively small speaker and there are limits to what can be expected in terms of both depth and scale. Q Acoustics quotes a low-end roll-off of 53Hz at +/-6dB and this feels pretty believable in use. You can buy harder-hitting speakers for the same sort of price, but most of them bring more cabinet colouration along for the ride. Similarly, if you really lean on the 5020 with the large

Q Acoustics speakers balancing competence with enough engagement to make sure that the result is never dull or matter of fact. Across a wide selection of partnering electronics, it is sufficiently transparent to demonstrate its character and traits while remaining fundamentally forgiving throughout.

So long as you have more than 20W at your disposal, it simply gets on with the business of delivering a wide spread of content in a wholly engaging way and has enough capability to allow for an electronics upgrade before you'll feel the need to change.

Conclusion

The result is that Q Acoustics 'completes' its range in fine style with a speaker that suggests that the 5000 Series manages to go a long way to matching the performance of the more expensive Concept 30 with a useful price saving. That clever new mid/bass driver points to some interesting further developments to come as well. The company might now have an offering for every terrestrial price point, but it feels like it's just getting started. **ES**

The 5020 has the uncanny ability to disappear from the soundstage it creates

scale and congested *Communion* by Scratch Massive, some of the composure it usually displays suffers a little, but not to the extent that the performance becomes unlistenable.

If you can keep levels down to a vaguely social level, though, it manages to balance impressive composure with a decent helping of fun. The Concept 30 sample has long since departed, but re-reading my notes and running the 5020 off the same Naim Supernait 3 (HFC 456), the more affordable speaker manages to demonstrate the same almost innate feeling of timing and the new mid/bass driver is arguably even more articulate. The complex but lively *Roots* by Skapel is something that it effortlessly unpicks and delivers with real engagement. This feeds into a developing theme of



Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY
★★★★★
LIKES: Involving, accurate and forgiving performance; build

VALUE FOR MONEY
★★★★★
DISLIKE: Needs a little care in positioning; limits to bass response

BUILD QUALITY
★★★★★
WE SAY: Another absurdly capable Q Acoustics speaker

EASE OF DRIVE
★★★★★

OVERALL
★★★★★