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Q ACOUSTICS 5040 5.1/£2,495

Steve Withers samples a floorstanding multichannel package from British sonic wizards Q Acoustics

Full-frontal assault



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When you think of multichannel audio the first thing that probably comes to mind are the surround (or height) channels, but in reality even the most active surround sound mix is primarily focused on the front of the soundstage.

The main left and right speakers, along with the centre channel, do most of the heavy lifting by creating a wall of sound at the screen end of the room. So it pays to invest in



bigger speakers that can handle the load, while also offering the added benefit of pulling double duty when playing music.

All of which makes the 5040 5.1 speaker package (£2,475) with its relatively compact floorstanders, very interesting. Q Acoustics' system includes a dedicated 5090 centre speaker, two 5010 standmounts on surround duties, and the QB12 subwoofer for LFE. The UK marque also offers a smaller 5.1 speaker package, based around the 5010 models and priced £1,975 [reviewed in *HCC* #344]. Larger 5050 floorstander (£1,299), and 5020 standmount speakers (£599) are also available to be bought separately.

Conceptual thinking

As is often the case, these mid-range models filter down innovations introduced further up the ladder, which in this case means the internal Helmholtz Pressure Equaliser (HPE) tubes of Q Acoustics' Concept speakers [*HCC* #329] are a feature of the 5040 and 5050 floorstanders, while Point-2-Point internal cabinet bracing is a feature across all the 5000 series speakers.

Furthermore, the 1in fabric dome tweeters take their lead from the higher-end Concept models, by being hermetically sealed and mechanically isolated from the speaker baffle. A vented rear chamber works to reduce distortion around the crossover point.

Where the 5000 series breaks new ground is with its bass/mid drivers, which debut Q Acoustics' C3 (or C-Cubed) 'Continuous Curved Cone' design. This, says the brand, combines the bass performance benefits of a traditional straight conic cone with the high/mid-range frequency control of a flared cone, improves dispersion characteristics, and better integrates with the partnering tweeter.

The 5040, 5010 and 5090 models are all bass reflex designs with rear-facing circular ports, and made from 18mm MDF, apart from their front baffles which use 25mm HDF (high density fibreboard). The baffles are laminated with a layer of butyl rubber and black acrylic trim to provide

a damping layer that suppresses cabinet vibrations, while magnetic fixings lock drivers in place.

All the 5000 speakers are available standalone in oak and walnut finishes, but Q Acoustics only offers the 5.1 packages in a choice of black or white. The overall design is clean and contemporary, with curved edges, magnetic black fabric grilles and reassuring build quality. Attention to detail also appeals, from the silver 'Q' logo on the front baffles, to the low-profile multi-way binding posts around the back and the 5040's solid aluminium stabilisers with top-adjustable spikes for easier levelling tweaks. >

AV INFO

PRODUCT:
5.1 floorstander speaker package

POSITION:
The latest mid-range series from Q Acoustics, below the Concept models

PEERS:
Bowers & Wilkins 600 series;
Monitor Audio Bronze 200

1. Newly designed for the 5000 series are the Continuous Curved Cone bass/mid drivers

2. The 5040 5.1 pack adds Q Acoustics' QB12 subwoofer

REVIEWS

There are also dedicated stands for the 5010s at £175 a pair, plus various wall brackets.

Lastly, the QB12 subwoofer is a capable bass-maker with a 12in long-throw driver and 220W of rated juice, delivering a claimed frequency down to a respectable 28Hz. It's not new, however, having launched in 2019.

Floorstanding fun

Buyers are unlikely to partner this well-priced pack with high-end kit, but I used it with both Storm Audio's PA16 MKII power amp [HCC #324] and my usual Trinnov processor [HCC #287], and Denon's more price commensurate AVC-X4800H [p48], for a thorough evaluation. And in both setups, the speakers soon revealed the kind of high-frequency smoothness and well-mannered delivery for which Q Acoustics models are known. The sound here lacks the forensic precision of some rival brands, but the overall balance to the presentation makes them great all-rounders. They're free of the brashness or aggression but still manage to sound fun.

The 5040 floorstanders sound as good with stereo music as they do with movies. Bass is deep and fulsome without needing help from the QB12 sub, and the mid-range and top-end show plenty of nuance. The powerful guitar chords at the beginning of Pink Floyd's 'Shine On You Crazy Diamond' from *Wish You Were Here* sound suitably epic, while the acoustic title track was crystal-clear and heartbreakingly intimate.

Moving on to multichannel soundtracks, it was time for a spot of 'drum dancing' courtesy of *House of Flying Daggers* (Blu-ray). This famous sequence proves three things: the system's use of the same tweeters and drivers produces a tonally balanced system; the C-Cubed drivers enjoy great overall dispersion; and the bass response is tight and controlled. As the pebbles bounce from drum to drum, the audio effects are steered slickly from speaker to speaker.

For a soundtrack to test a 5.1-channel system's ability to deliver scale, look no further than Christopher Nolan's *Oppenheimer* (4K Blu-ray). The British auteur continues to eschew any of that Dolby Atmos nonsense, preferring to create a 'traditional' multichannel mix that often employs extensive dynamic range for effect and isn't afraid to mine the LFE depths when necessary.

The Trinity Test is the standout sonic sequence, and even though you know the shockwave from the atomic explosion is coming it still catches you off-guard. The two 5040s, the 5090 centre, and the QB12 sub combine to create a powerful wall of sound. The 5010s also give a good account of themselves at the rear, but it's the tsunami from the front that really hits you in the chest.

The 5040s (and 5010s for that matter) have a decent low-frequency response, but it's the QB12 that fills in everything below 50Hz. It does this effectively, extending the system's overall bass response, and integrates effortlessly with the rest of the cabinets, and especially the floorstanders.

Nuclear detonations aside, the majority of *Oppenheimer* is people taking in lecture halls, interview rooms and Senate hearings, and here this 5.1 set really delivers

SPECIFICATIONS

5040

DRIVERS: 1 x 1in tweeter; 2 x 5in Continuous Curved Cone bass/mid drivers
ENCLOSURE: Rear-ported bass reflex **FREQUENCY RESPONSE (CLAIMED):** 39Hz-30kHz
SENSITIVITY (CLAIMED): 91.5dB **IMPEDANCE (CLAIMED):** 6ohm (nominal); 3ohm (minimum) **POWER HANDLING (CLAIMED):** 150W **DIMENSIONS:** 967(h) x 361(w) x 293(d)mm **WEIGHT:** 18kg

5090

DRIVERS: 1 x 1in tweeter; 2 x 4.5in Continuous Curved Cone bass/mid drivers
ENCLOSURE: Dual rear-ported bass reflex **FREQUENCY RESPONSE (CLAIMED):** 57Hz-30kHz **SENSITIVITY (CLAIMED):** 90.5dB **IMPEDANCE (CLAIMED):** 6ohm (nominal); 3.2ohm (minimum) **POWER HANDLING (CLAIMED):** 150W **DIMENSIONS:** 164(h) x 430(w) x 243(d)mm **WEIGHT:** 8.5kg

5010

DRIVERS: 1 x 1in tweeter; 1 x 4.5in C3 Continuous Curved Cone bass/mid
ENCLOSURE: Rear-ported bass reflex **FREQUENCY RESPONSE (CLAIMED):** 56Hz-30kHz
SENSITIVITY (CLAIMED): 86.3dB **IMPEDANCE (CLAIMED):** 6ohm (nominal); 3.3ohm (minimum) **POWER HANDLING (CLAIMED):** 90W **DIMENSIONS:** 264(h) x 160(w) x 263(d)mm **WEIGHT:** 5.6kg

QB12 (SUBWOOFER)

DRIVERS: 1 x 12in long-throw bass driver **ONBOARD POWER (CLAIMED):** 220W Class D amplifier **ENCLOSURE:** Sealed **FREQUENCY RESPONSE (CLAIMED):** 28Hz-300Hz **REMOTE CONTROL:** No **DIMENSIONS:** 400(h) x 400(w) x 400(d)mm **WEIGHT:** 21.5kg **FEATURES:** LFE input; stereo line-level input; phase, crossover and gain controls; auto on

TESTED WITH



OPPENHEIMER: Christopher Nolan's remarkable film about the life of the 'father of the atom bomb' makes people talking in a room as exciting as a nuclear detonation. Thanks to gorgeous IMAX photography and a suitably bombastic 5.1 soundtrack it also looks and sounds fantastic on its recent 4K Blu-ray.



the goods by producing a tonally balanced 360-degree soundfield that creates a palpable sense of space through background chatter and echoes that envelop you. And the relatively large 5090 melds well with the 5040s, bridging the front soundstage and delivering the dialogue (of which there's a lot) with clarity and focus.

Ahead of the curve

The result is a system that's always balanced and composed, able to find the drama, detail and fun in any soundmix. The 5040 floorstanders not only ensure two-channel music sounds superb, but generate the kind of scale often required by today's blockbuster soundtracks. If that's not enough, innovations from Q Acoustics' flagship

Concept range, along with the new C-Cube driver design, help this package stay ahead of the curve ■

3. Rear view of the 5010 bookshelf/standmount shows its bass reflex port and inset speaker binding posts

HCC VERDICT



Q Acoustics 5040 5.1

→ £2,475 → www.qacoustics.co.uk

WE SAY: Q Acoustics' impressive 5.1 package has stylish looks, a solid build, great performance and affordability – stars of the show are the tremendous 5040 floorstanders.