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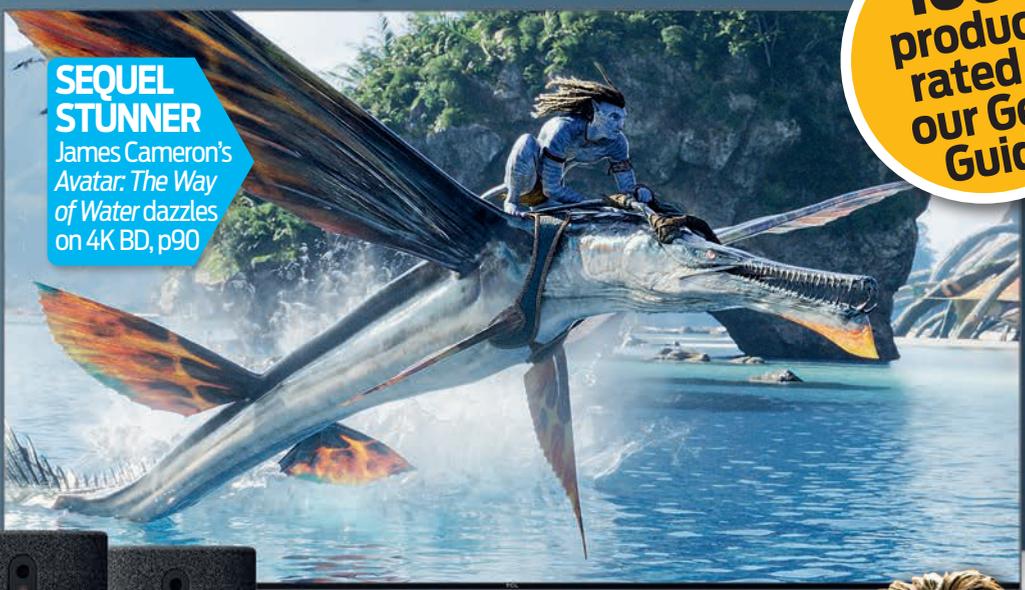


TOP OF THE WORLD
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SEQUEL STUNNER
James Cameron's *Avatar: The Way of Water* dazzles on 4K BD, p90

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On Test

- BenQ W4000i 4K HDR projector
- Q Acoustics' 5010 5.1 speaker pack
- Perlisten D212s sub
- Hisense 65U7KQ TV
- Sony TA-AN1000 amp



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HOME CINEMA
Choice
BEST BUY

'These loudspeakers look exceptionally pretty, with curved cabinet edges and modest dimensions'

AV INFO

PRODUCT:
Compact 5.1
standmount
speaker package

POSITION:
The new Q Acoustics
mid-range offering

PEERS:
SVS Prime Satellite 5.1;
Monitor Audio
Bronze 50 5.1

Mark Craven admires a stylish, compact 5.1 package that fills a gap in the UK marque's loudspeaker lineup

Q Acoustics finds its middle man

For a while now, there's been a bit of a hole in Q Acoustics' loudspeaker range. At the entry-level you've had the affordable 3000i Series, and at the top, since 2013, have sat the company's Concept models. Missing was an option in-between.

Okay, that's not quite true, as a look back at my review of the Concept 50 5.1 package in *HCC #329* reveals I said that system was also filling a gap. But, in fairness, then I was talking about new, more affordable additions to the Concept series, but here it's an entirely new product line. And as the manufacturer itself insists its 5000 series is positioned between the 3000 Series and the Concept options, who am I to argue?

Under pressure

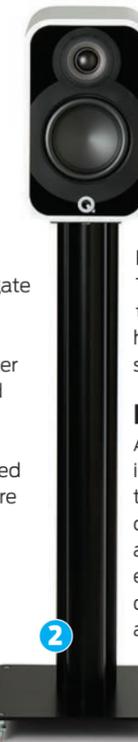
Anyway, what you really need to know is that Q Acoustics' 5000 Series comprises six speakers, which – as is often the way in the loudspeaker world – pilfer some of the technological developments of their pricier siblings. Among these are internal Helmholtz Pressure Equaliser (HPE) tubes in the floorstanding 5040 (£999) and 5050 (£TBC), which help tune the bass output, and the Point-2-Point internal cabinet bracing across all the models.

The 1in fabric dome tweeters are also 'a design taken' from the Concept models, says Q Acoustics, once again hermetically sealed and mechanically isolated from the speaker baffle, albeit here in a revised housing that's presumably less costly to manufacture. A vented rear chamber works to reduce distortion around the crossover point.

What is completely fresh are the bass/mid drivers, which debut Q Acoustics' C3 Continuous Curved Cone design. This, I'm told, is the result of a 'multi-disciplinary team research project to investigate a new, multi-radius complex curve contour cone profile'. In other words, the manufacturer has taken a long hard look at driver geometry, and arrived (after 16 variations) at the 5000 Series' smooth, radiused driver, sans central dust cap, claiming it to deliver optimum dispersion and break-up characteristics. Q Acoustics also says its lengthy R&D process proved the C3 driver couldn't be scaled, so new profiles were modelled for the different size units employed throughout the range.

Stand and deliver

The Brit-based brand has created two dedicated home cinema packages, the 5010 5.1 (£1,975) and 5040 5.1 (£2,475). The former, on test here, is the simplest, as it adds the 5090 centre to four of the 5010 bookshelf/standmount



models. The latter uses the 5040 floorstanders for L/R duty. Both systems get their LFE kicks from Q Acoustics' QB 12 subwoofer, which is a familiar model as it also graces the Concept home cinema packages. Stands are available for the 5010s, priced £175 for a pair.

The 5010 and 5090 cabinets are bass reflex designs with rear-facing circular ports, and are made from 18mm MDF, apart from their front baffles which use 25mm HDF (high density fibreboard). The baffles are given a butyl rubber layer and acrylic trim for a constrained layer damping construction to help reduce cabinet vibration. Magnetic fixings lock supplied drivers neatly into place.

Black or white?

Although the 5010 and 5090 are sold separately in oak and walnut colourways, for this 5.1 package the options are limited to a more conventional black or white. But that's surely no bother, unless you are a wood fetishist, as these loudspeakers all look exceptionally pretty, with curved edges and modest dimensions that will suit any room size – the 5010s are a slinky 16cm wide, for example. Build quality throws up no quibbles either and, as usual with Q Acoustics, the attention to detail, from the low-profile multi-way binding posts on the rear panels to the natty front-baffle 'Q' logo, makes



1. Buy the 5010 models separately and there are walnut and oak finish options too

2. Q Acoustics' 3000FSi stands are £179 a pair

REVIEWS

the system price seem like money well spent even before you've wired it all in.

Listening pleasure

My experience of previous Q Acoustics speakers, from the bottom-of-the-rung 3010i bookshelf (HCC #309) to its £2,000 Concept 50 floorstander (HCC #329), is that there's a performance thread running through them all. This 'house sound' favours smoothness in the high-

'A performance that excels when it comes to ambience, detail and body – this is how it should be done'

frequencies, resulting in a listening experience that's easy on the ear and ripe for lengthy music sessions.

This does mean that straight off the bat with a movie soundmix, you might consider the 5010 5.1 system to be playing it a little bit safe. Given the frenetic action of *Ready Player One*'s famous street race sequence (4K Blu-ray), the sonic action is all there, but the crashes and smashes and sounds of metal on metal don't exactly rip through you as they can on other speakers.

But then the more you listen, the more you clock all the other stuff this system does so well, and – if you're me – will end up smitten.

For example, there's the wonderfully controlled, but rich and full-bodied, bass sound of these cabinets, and how it blends with the hefty output of the 220W-rated, 12in driver QB 12 subwoofer. A quick A/B comparison with a set of Q Acoustics' more affordable 3010i bookshelf speakers reveals the 5010s put clear distance between them in the low-end, where there's improved extension and greater definition. With *Ready Player One*, this meant Foley details and dialogue had excellent mid-range solidity.

Another high point is this system's uniform delivery and sense of cohesion. With four 5010 speakers all around, you get a soundstage of smooth effects pans and enveloping ambience. The atmospheric audio design of the Jedha city sequences in *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* (Disney+), where there's always something chattering or burbling away offscreen, is conveyed well. And when the half-built Death Star fires a test shot at the planet, causing a towering fireball and rolling dust-cloud, this Q Acoustics system leans into the chaos, with the QB 12 subwoofer adding authentic low-frequency scale to the destruction.

Also impressive here is the effortless and even-handed nature of the performance. The 5010 speakers aren't one to throw an awkward spotlight on a particular tone; the varied textures and frequencies in *Rogue One*'s orchestral score are treated equally, from high strings to low brass and timpani drums. And the 5090 centre is as happy with the gruff dialogue of Forest Whitaker (as Saw Gerrera) as it is with the higher voice of Felicity Jones's Jyn Erso or the mechanised chat from downbeat droid K-2SO.

SPECIFICATIONS

5010

DRIVE UNITS: 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

5090

DRIVE UNITS: 1 x 1in tweeter; 2 x 4.5in C3 Continuous Curved Cone bass/mid
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

QB 12 (subwoofer)

DRIVE UNITS: 1 x 12in long-throw bass driver **ONBOARD POWER (CLAIMED):** 220W Class D amp **ENCLOSURE:** Sealed **FREQUENCY RESPONSE (CLAIMED):** 28Hz-300Hz **REMOTE CONTROL:** No **DIMENSIONS:** 400(h) x 400(w) x 440(d)mm **WEIGHT:** 21.5kg **FEATURES:** LFE input; stereo line input; phase, crossover and gain control; auto on

TESTED WITH



ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY:

Arguably the best of the Disney-era *Star Wars* flicks, this prequel to *A New Hope* delivers a gripping, space-hopping storyline that culminates in the greatest set-piece the franchise has yet delivered. Stream it on Disney+ or pick it up on its high-quality 4K BD release.



Stereo music through the 5010 speakers is similarly a delight. The bass presence, detail across the frequency range and tonality brought to instruments and vocals meant a session with Michael Jackson's *Off The Wall* on CD had me fighting the urge to get up and boogie. And even without the subwoofer on hand to fatten and scale up the soundstage, the size of the image created was impressive given the cabinet dimensions. When Jacko insisted I didn't stop until I'd got enough, I followed orders, switching to Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon*. Again, the sweet, balanced sound of the 5010s proved a good fit for this immaculately recorded prog rock.

Job done

There's really nothing to grumble about here, except the well-mannered, smooth presentation that might not be to everyone's taste. Q Acoustics' speakers combine sultry styling with a really listenable performance that excels when it comes to ambience, detail and bass/mid-range body. Compact 5.1 speaker packages aren't as commonplace as they once were; this is a reminder of how it should be done ■

3. The 5010 features a rear port to tune the output of its 4.5in bass/mid driver

HCC VERDICT



Q Acoustics 5010 5.1

→ £1,975 → www.qacoustics.co.uk

WE SAY: With this compact 5.1 package, Q Acoustics offers an effective upgrade over its 3010i. Performance, design and build quality all impress – as does the affordable price.