



Great Dane

The newest addition to Audiovector's entry-level range joins a hugely competitive and talented sector. **David Vivian** takes a listen

Copenhagen-based Audiovector isn't the kind of speaker maker you can pigeon-hole. Not as large as more familiar Danish brands in the UK such as DALI and Dynaudio, it has a core product range that stretches all the way from the £1,025 QR1 entry-level standmount (*HFC* 418) to the uber-high-end R11 Arreté, which will set you back in the region of £200,000. And yet you could argue that Audiovector is also the most pragmatic speaker maker on the planet. One tier down from the R11

and R8, the lower-numbered R lineup, while still ostensibly high end, certainly flies closer to the real world and, uniquely, allows purchasers to buy-in with a base model and, rather than chop it in for a more expensive one when the upgrading itch strikes further down the line, send it back to the factory for an incremental upgrade with better drivers, superior crossover and even an up-rated cabinet. Cost-effective or what?

The QR range was designed by Audiovector CEO Mads Kilfoth. He explains his thinking: "I wanted a

speaker family with build quality and value for money rarely seen at the price point, but also one built in Denmark with aesthetic and sonic aspects that appeal to everybody, not just audiophiles." And it's a tweeter practically unseen at the price point that gives the clue to the QR5's ambition. Effectively the same Gold Leaf Air Motion Tweeter (AMT) used in the R11 flagship, it really is a thing of beauty, replete with compression-reducing double rear chamber and exposed gold mesh 'S-Stop Filter' to smooth sibilance, rather like the filters placed in front of microphones for singers in the studio.

The unit sits in a housing that's made from a single piece of aerospace-grade aluminium which has been precision machined, glass blasted and brushed, and then anodised with a tungsten/titanium finish to have a reassuringly

The ribbon adds air, space and clarity to brilliantly open out the performance

up-market sheen that exactly matches the aluminium trims of the remaining three drivers. The combined effect is extremely crisp and smart.

Being a three-way design, two of the QR5's main 152mm drivers handle the bass frequencies with the third dedicated to the midrange. Dubbed 'Pure Piston', the units feature a sandwich-type cone with two layers of aluminium constraining a fibre and foamed glue filling. The filling is intended to mitigate the high frequency break up behaviour of the otherwise desirably stiff and pistic aluminium cone. It means that the midrange driver is good for much higher frequencies than would be the case with a conventional unit and, therefore, makes the handover to the AMT a much simpler affair requiring no special equalisation in the crossover. The midrange driver has been given its own sealed asymmetric enclosure to prevent standing waves.

Like the QR1 standmount, the QR5 has a slot-style reflex port but instead of firing forwards, it's located at the base and fires down onto a plinth separated from the enclosure by about 30mm. The plinth comes fitted with nylon bolts for use with polished hard floors, but also has widely spaced threads for the supplied spikes.

Round the back, the single pair of binding posts precludes bi-wiring/amping but, again, conspicuously

▶ DETAILS

PRODUCT
Audiovector QR5

ORIGIN
Denmark

TYPE
3-way floorstanding
loudspeaker

WEIGHT
23kg

DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
210 x 1,057 x 270mm

FEATURES
● 1x AMT ribbon
tweeter
● 1x 152mm
aluminium sandwich
midrange driver
● 2x 152mm
aluminium sandwich
bass drivers
● Quoted sensitivity:
91dB/1W/1m (4ohm)

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beefy engineering mirrors the solid build obvious in the cabinets with their elegantly rounded corners and high-quality walnut veneer finish (black and white gloss finishes are also available).

Sound quality

Audiovector's pricier R-line speakers are famously fast, dynamic, open and rhythmically explicit and while that isn't a description I feel naturally inclined to assign to the QR5, I get the impression it's only the compromises implicit in building down to a price and the materials used that are holding it back, and then hardly at all in the upper frequencies, which are as refined and resolute as you'd hope given the quality of the ribbon tweeter. Considering the kit it's likely to be partnered with, the QR5's more relaxed presentation is by no means a bad thing.

And, as with so much involving hi-fi, such considerations tend to be relative. I decide to audition the tall Audiovector in the larger of my listening rooms and give it an outing with my resident Falcon Acoustics RAM Studio 30 (HFC 442) – a significantly more expensive three-way design of similar size that possesses an effortless, easy-breathing and largely neutral (okay, a little warm) delivery.



HOW IT COMPARES
The QR5 would have held its own in our recent Group Test (HFC 460), sharing many qualities with the victorious KEF R5 and even bettering it for ultimate treble quality, though the KEF costs £800 less. For a sprightlier presentation, Spendor's compact, two-way A4 (£2,200) is well worth a listen while if preferences err more towards a warm and expansive presentation, Amphion's £2,520 Argon 3LS has the answer. But as an all-rounder, the QR5 is hard to beat.

The Gold Leaf Air Motion Tweeter is effectively the same as the one used in the R11 flagship



First surprise is that the QR5 just about matches the Studio 30 for bass extension and weight. Neither speaker is the last word in low-frequency agility, texture and definition, but the luxury of true deep bass that isn't obviously hyped should not be underestimated. It's a valuable asset not just in getting across the body and power of George Jiri' Mraz's double bass on *Once Upon A Summertime* from the Oscar Peterson

QR5's deft way with female vocals which, in this case, are kept clean and potent. Timbre is beautifully portrayed. Diana Krall has seldom sounded smokier, Sarah Jane Morris hardly huskier. If the Audiovector can't match the precision and panache of the Falcon's dome midrange, it never sounds less than beguilingly clear and lucid and has an unerring ability to communicate on an emotional level. Given its ample sonic gifts elsewhere, that's good enough.

The midrange driver is good for far higher frequencies than a conventional unit

Trio's *Walking The Line*, but also a sense of recording venue ambience and balance that feels right and allows you to relax into the music. Hard to separate the two, here. Marginally, the Studio 30 sounds a little tauter and the QR5 softer but a tad more tuneful. Both generate a wide and deep soundstage, but the QR5's imaging is a little more specific.

At the other frequency extreme, the Falcon's fabric dome tweeter is notably smooth and unfatiguing, if a little rolled-off through the speaker's voicing. Here, the Audiovector's ribbon shines, eclipsing the Studio 30 for silkiness while adding air, space and clarity to a degree that brilliantly enlivens and opens out the straight ahead wonderful opening gospel choir cut, *Every Hour* by Kanye West.

The frenetically paced and up-front track additionally showcases the

Conclusion

I doubt those seeking a tight, fast, leading-edgy sound will immediately click with the QR5, but I'd be willing to bet they'll come round to its subtler charms given time. The temporal elements are all present and correct – dynamics, too. They're just not pushed hard in your face. For the good of a long-term relationship, I reckon that's a definite plus ●

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

- SOUND QUALITY** ★★★★★ **LIKE:** Blends refinement and clarity like little else at the price; build and finish
- VALUE FOR MONEY** ★★★★★ **DISLIKE:** Thrill-seekers might need to look elsewhere
- BUILD QUALITY** ★★★★★ **WE SAY:** A brilliantly judged and beautifully built floorstander for the money. A class act.
- EASE OF DRIVE** ★★★★★

OVERALL

