

Group test verdict

After days of comparisons, **Nick Tate** works out the final ranking and discovers a worthy winner for this standmount shootout

EVERY SINGLE ONE of these designs is seriously impressive in its own right. This shows the high standards you expect from affordable, mid-priced standmounts these days.

Q Acoustics' Concept 30 is at the bottom, but it's the lowest-priced. It's an extremely impressive performer considering its cost – with a warm, engaging and endearing character. It does a lot for relatively little money, and is way ahead of its cheaper siblings.

Acoustic Energy's AE500 is next up. Again, this is the second cheapest design here and does brilliantly for the money. It has a distinctively

smooth and silky nature, as well as being highly musically satisfying. Yet it doesn't have the sheer insight of the higher-ranking designs in the group.

Monitor Audio's fifth-generation Gold 100 takes fourth place; despite being on sale for several years, it's hard to see how it can comprehensively be bettered at this price. It's a very good all-rounder with a light, bright and engaging sound – and it looks superb too.

Bowers & Wilkins' 707 S3 comes third. One of the best 'jack of all trades' speakers here, it's a real class act. It's hard to fault in many ways.

Across all types of music it sounds clean, controlled and detailed. It just lacks a couple of things that mark out the higher-ranking standmounts in the group.

PMC's prodigy1 is the surprise of the pack and a very worthy runner up. It isn't as an accomplished all-rounder as the Monitor Audio or B&W, but is riotously musical – it's such a hoot to hear, especially with beat-driven music. Super-fast and expressive, it oozes passion and has great bass. It makes even the hallowed *Group Test* winner seem a little lacking in enthusiasm.



WINNER

Quad's Revela 1 is the most expensive here, and sounds it. It simply outclasses all the others in most respects. Even at its price, it's going to be a headache for rivals costing a fair bit more. Highly insightful and sophisticated, it gives an impressively open window on the world.



Make/model	Acoustic Energy AE500	Bowers & Wilkins 707 S3	Monitor Audio Gold 100 5G	PMC prodigy1	Q Acoustics Concept 30	Quad Revela 1
Price/month	£1,050	£1,300	£1,600	£1,250	£900	£1,800
Sound	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Build	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Ease of drive	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Overall	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
	Clean, smooth, detailed and refined, this punches way above its weight	Powerful, precise, engaging and upfront, this all-rounder is truly hard to beat	Superb out-of-the-box imaging, allied to a crisp, etched and enjoyable sound	The wildcard of the pack, this new baby box is enormous fun to listen to	Smooth, warm, musical and fun, this baby box is hugely capable at the price	As old as the hills, this is a minimalist design that continues to deliver the goods
Website	acoustic-energy.co.uk	bowerswilkins.com	monitoraudio.com	pmc-speakers.com	qacoustics.co.uk	quad-hifi.co.uk

Key features

Bass reflex	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Transmission line	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
HF dome	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
HF ribbon	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Bi-wire	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No

TRY WITH THESE

INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER: Cyrus Classic AMP **£2,000 HFC 506**

A very smooth yet open-sounding 91W per channel rated Class AB amplifier with plenty of power to drive any of these speakers. It also sports a myriad of inputs, including a moving-magnet phono stage and digital ins. Despite its svelte appearance, it packs a satisfying punch.



TURNTABLE: Rega Planar 6 **£1,400 HFC 427**

This is a wonderfully-proportioned thing of beauty. Design-wise, it's a case of less is more – it's a minimalist product that's totally devoid of frills. That means more of the cost of the product goes on the guts of the machine; you get a reliable belt-drive system and a highly respected arm.



CD PLAYER: Marantz CD60 **£600**

Lots of music lovers still have large CD libraries, so why pay a streaming company to hear music you already own? This beautifully built and finished budget player has a great quality transport, but its modest internal DAC still sounds good enough to sing with these standmounts.

