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Hi-Fi Choice

PASSION FOR SOUND

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"POWER AND PUNCH"



Perlisten's stunning R5m three-way standmount



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Stand and deliver!

Nick Tate auditions Perlisten's punchy-sounding R5m loudspeaker – one of the biggest standmounts going

DETAILS

PRODUCT
Perlisten R5m

ORIGIN
USA/China

TYPE
3-way bass reflex standmount loudspeaker

WEIGHT
17.5kg

DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
230 x 546 x 336mm

FEATURES
● 3x 26mm silk dome tweeter/mid array
● 2x 165mm HPF bass drivers

● Claimed sensitivity: 89.2dB/2.83v/1m (4ohm)

DISTRIBUTOR
Karma AV

WEBSITE
perlistenaudio.com
karma-av.co.uk

There are several things that mark out this loudspeaker as special, not least its physical proportions. The R5m is an imposing standmount that, when on its optional £1,350 stands, is considerably taller than most similarly priced floorstanders. Its other distinguishing feature is the fact that it uses multiple drive units; it's a three-way design with no less than five drivers – more of which later.

It forms part of Perlisten's middle-range R series, and is described as a 'monitor'. It certainly has the look of something that you might see in a recording studio.

The R series is a value-oriented version of the company's flagship S range. It's a totally bespoke design with no drive units bought-in off the shelf. Into its tall (for a standmount) cabinet is set Perlisten's Directivity Pattern Control (DPC) array, which comprises a single central 26mm silk dome tweeter set into a waveguide, with small midrange domes sitting immediately above and below. The company's Chief Technology Officer Erik Wiederholtz explains that these three work in unison from 1.3kHz to about 3kHz, above which the central tweeter handles all frequencies up to 20kHz and beyond.

The idea is to give a wide spread of sound where the ear is most sensitive (1kHz upwards), extending right up to a bat-bothering 30kHz, from three small drive units acting as pretty much a point source. These also have the benefit, according to Erik, of having much lower moving mass than a larger sized cone doing the same job. Also, a measure of time-alignment is included by the physical offset in distance from the centre tweeter to the two midrange domes – making for better phase coherence. Lower frequencies are delivered by a pair of 165mm HPF polymer drivers.

The cabinet is a sturdy thing, and comes in a choice of piano black or

gloss white. The bass reflex port is downfiring, and for this to work there's an unusual arrangement at the bottom of the enclosure. The inner bottom panel is a little higher than the base, giving some free space for the air coming out of the port to propagate and exit via the side-facing vents. The gap between the lower port and the top of the stand is a known quantity, whereas with rear-facing ports the listener may have the speaker at any random distance from the rear boundary wall. This means that more consistent results can be achieved, with room placement playing less of a role in the quality of the bass produced. To further aid integration, port bungs are supplied to control bass boom.

Although its quoted sensitivity is pretty good, it has a 40hm nominal impedance dropping down to a minimum of 2.7ohm. The latter figure

It sounds all-of-a-piece and never loses composure when things get really loud

is very low, meaning that although the R5m will go loud for any given number of watts, the amplifier driving it must do a lot of heavy lifting. Most modern amps should be able to cope with this, but some will struggle.

I find the R5m works well on its attractive optional matching speaker stands. In my room, I dispense with the port bungs and place both speakers around 25cm from my boundary wall, slightly toed-in. A Chord Hugo TT2 DAC is used for the bulk of testing, in conjunction with Exposure 3510 pre/power amplifiers (HFC 468 and 485 respectively), among others.

Sound quality

This is an extremely capable and well-rounded design that does an awful lot very well. However, you do need to ensure that it is properly positioned and driven by appropriate amplification. It needs lots of watts to really come out of its shell. Properly juiced up, however, the R5m is capable of great things.

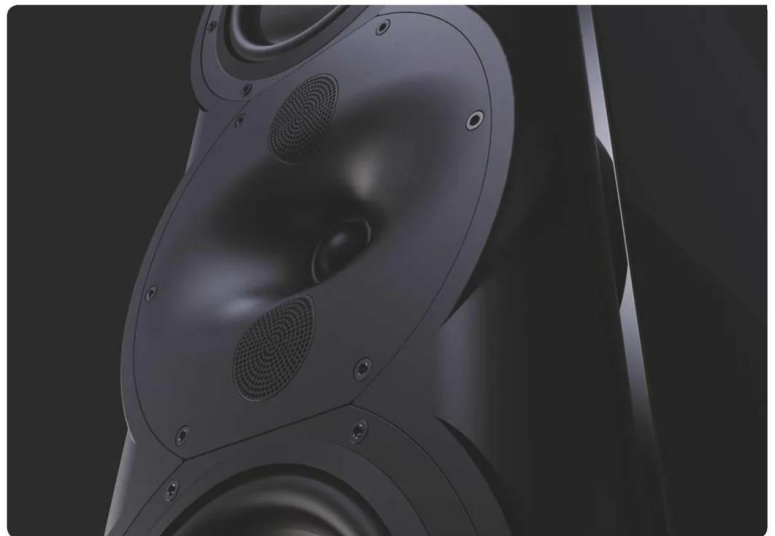
Tonally it is reasonably neutral; there are no harsh, shouty bits up top, and the bass is pretty well controlled and impressively extended. Midband is clean and integrates well with the rest of the frequency range. There's a certain tonal dryness to the R5m; this isn't a speaker that will embellish the signal you're feeding it. Many will think this to be a good thing, others looking for a more romantic or 'sepia-tinged' presentation



HOW IT COMPARES

At £6,700, Kerr Acoustic's K300 Mk3 is a bit more expensive, but sits alongside the Perlisten at the top of the premium standmount shortlist – for those looking for a big, gutsy, punchy sound. It doesn't quite have the bass articulation of the R5m, nor the consistency of sound at high listening levels, but at more real-world volumes it is slightly more transparent in the midband and clearer in the treble – with better sparkle to hi-hats, for example. It's also better suited to smaller listening rooms, where the R5m prefers larger ones. Both are excellent and well worth investigating.

The optional matching stands will set you back a further £1,350



should look elsewhere. It certainly conveys the distinctively clean sound of Steely Dan's *Aja* very accurately.

Bass is impressive for standmount that's for sure. I can think of few others currently on sale that do better. It is deep, extended and controlled. There's no sign of any upper bass bump that some companies engineer into their standmounts to give the impression that they're bigger and bassier than they really are. Ultravox's *The Voice* is a case in point here; it has deep, grumbling bass that most standmounts don't bother with, but the R5m is up for the challenge. Even at high listening levels, it drives cleanly and the large amount of low frequencies it puts out doesn't seem to upset it or me in the least.

This loudspeaker's midband and treble performance is very good too – although here it faces stiff competition from other designs that do things equally well or better, in my view. It beautifully carries the opening synth of Pink Floyd's *Wish You Were Here*, offering a clean and detailed sound with an immediate and incisive feel. I can easily discern the lustrous analogue synthesiser sound and get a good sense of the brooding atmosphere around. However, the slightly more expensive Kerr Acoustic K300 Mk3 has a better sense of air and space, with a sparkle up top that's particularly apparent on hi-hat cymbals. The R5m's array works well, but still can't quite match the latter's ribbon tweeter.

Rhythmically the Perlisten is highly capable, but lacks an ultra-fast, firecracker sound. Instead it prefers to render everything in a clear, orderly and controlled way – so the listener can make sense of what's going on. Some rivals at this price come over with more zest and brio, but fall short with musically complex

passages, whereas the reverse is true here. Timing is crisp and with plenty of pace when playing Haitink's reading of Vaughan Williams' *The London Symphony*. The *Lento – Allegro Risoluto* is lovely to hear, with lots of texture to strings and an enjoyable musical flow.

This recording also shows the speaker's ability with soundstaging. Played at lowish volumes, it sounds clean and tidy, but up the level and a cathedral-like soundstage appears. Given plenty of watts, the R5m really disappears into the room and gives a huge, three-dimensional recorded acoustic with accurate image location. Better still, it holds steady on transient peaks, continuing to sound all-of-a-piece and never losing composure when things get really loud. As such, it is best suited to larger rooms and higher listening levels – where it really comes out of its shell.

Conclusion

Perlisten's R5m may look a little quirky from a design point of view, but proves to be a highly able speaker. In a decent sized room with powerful amplification, it's an essential addition if you're after a serious, grown-up standmount ●

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY ★★★★★	LIKE: Powerful, engaging, wideband sound
VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★☆	DISLIKE: Expensive stands; hard to drive
BUILD QUALITY ★★★★★	WE SAY: A super standmount... on steroids
EASE OF DRIVE ★★★★☆	

OVERALL

