

hi-fi+

GLJFRU



Following the true path?

Guru QM10 stand-mount loudspeakers

by Jason Kennedy

It's said (not by animal lovers, it must be said) that there's more than one way to skin a cat, and the Guru Quality Manager 10 is as good an example of this as I have come across. This is a radical rethink of loudspeaker technology from Sweden that on first impressions looks very stylish and could be part of the Sonos wireless multiroom system, if it were beige (fortunately it's not). From an audio nuts' perspective, however, it isn't terribly encouraging and one imagines that many would write it off as just another lifestyle product, with an iPod dock somewhere in the back.

The drive units are neither large nor particularly high tech looking and the box volume is pretty compact. But good things often come in small packages and this is certainly the case here, the fact that it looks good to these eyes at least is an added bonus in these interior conscious days. There is a white finish, too.

With its wide but short baffle and square section, the Guru cabinet goes against all current thinking in loudspeaker design. Maybe that is why it sounds so different and, it has to be said, so much more musically engaging than most loudspeakers.

It's size is an issue though if you have a larger room; basically it's best suited to normal UK living rooms in the vicinity of 4m by 5m, I tried it in a much longer room that is irregularly shaped and it struggled to deliver the goods. But moving the big ATCs in my living/listening room and giving the Guru the expanse of flat wall that its designed



to work with transformed the performance to something that I am tempted to buy. Which – for a penny pinching ReviewScrooge who has the luxury of being able to borrow all manner of top-notch speakers – is saying something.

The reason is that this speaker lets the music take centre stage. You can hear the recording quality of each album and for the first minute or so this can get in the way if you have gone from a great recording (Terje Rydal's *Vossabrygg* on ECM) to a less impressive one (Bob Dylan's *Highway 61 Revisited* in mono). But it's not long before the content takes over and you can get on with enjoying the music. And while

you might point out that this is the point of the exercise, it's one that the reviewing process has a tendency to undermine.

Others in the reviewing fraternity (such as Paul Messenger) bang on about musicality and communication quite often. But it's only when you come across a product that does deliver the musical goods that you realise how fundamental this is.

The Guru is not the most neutral of loudspeakers; it's not distinctly coloured either, but it must be cheating to get the level of bass extension that it does. This is partly achieved by placing the speakers close to the wall and toed in so

● EQUIPMENT REVIEW

▶ that their axis cross in front of the listener. The manual suggests that a seating position that is 20 per cent further away from the speakers than the distance between them will give the optimum results. My sofa is not so conveniently placed and is probably closer to twice the distance from

base as you were recommended in the good ol' Linn days) because it helps get rid of floor reflections in the bass and

the speakers but this doesn't seem to screw things up. Guru's

maker also suggests that you damp the wall between and either side of the speakers, it even goes so far as to suggest having carpeting in the room and adding extra curtains behind the speakers.

The manual lists several 'Options to enhance the listening experience' and these include placing pictures on parallel walls and letting them tip downwards so that the top of the picture is two inches from the wall. A low coffee table is also advised (please welcome the Ikea Lack table back to the audio industry after a long absence. Fortunately, you don't have to cut out the

it is also nice to put your legs on it when enjoying your favourite music!

This is hard to disagree with and I might just get that one sorted; I've tried it in the past and the table just gets covered in stuff, leaving little room for resting the legs.



I got great results when pairing the Guru with a Leema Tucana integrated amplifier, a notably well timed component itself and something that's clearly a factor. Nonetheless the CD source was an near vintage Sony XA-333ES multichannel SACD player, a machine that while entirely competent is not renowned for its musicality. So the fact that it sounds so good with the Guru is encouraging really and suggests that it is a more on the ball player than it had seemed. The source might be king but it needs the right conduit to prove as much.

Guru is an unusual company in many respects, for a start it wasn't started as a speaker company, its roots go back twenty years to the time that Ingvar Öhman wanted a loudspeaker to demonstrate how human hearing works for the purpose of lectures on the subject. The story goes that he could not find a ▶



► speaker that did the job sufficiently well so he made some himself, apparently his home is choc-a-bloc with prototypes that he built in the quest to make the perfect tool for the job. Inevitably his students did a little more than appreciate the functions of human flight responses and used them to play music with and people started wanting to buy them. For some time this was done in an ad-hoc fashion with long lead times and no notion of making it a commercial product. However, when viola player and owner of Guru Pro Audio Erik Ring got involved things changed and the QM10 was put into production.

It's interesting to note, however, that Ingvar is not keen on spiking loudspeakers as this is an approach I've avoided for some time, albeit primarily with the intention of stopping the speaker vibrating floor boards and the system that's sitting atop them. But Ingvar's reasons for rejecting speaker spikes could be more pertinent and go some way to explaining why the Townshend Seismic speaker bases improve matters even on a concrete floor.

By taking a completely different approach to speaker design Ingvar has succeeded in building a speaker that combines attributes that are usually considered exclusive. The QM10 has wide bandwidth, great sensitivity to dynamics and low level detail and remarkable imaging. All from a small two way box with essentially low tech drive units. Guru plans to release a passive subwoofer stand for the QM10 which should give it the ability to fill larger spaces, I just hope that it doesn't detract from the magic of the speaker alone, but I'm looking forward to finding out. In the meantime, the distributor should not expect much response from his requests to return the speaker; it's a totally addictive design.

A small speaker with ever so humble drive units shouldn't sound anything like as good as the Guru QM10. It's almost magic.

We spoke at length with Ingvar Öhman on his intriguing Guru design and other factors. Turn to page 92 for more details of his unique take on how to make a loudspeaker. ►+

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Guru QM10

Type:	two-way, Helmholtz resonator, stand-mount loudspeakers
Drive Units:	16mm dome tweeter, 102mm plastic covered paper cone woofer
Bandwidth:	30Hz-20kHz (in room)
Sensitivity	86dB (2,83V, 1m)
Nominal Impedance:	5 Ohms
Mean value:	8 Ohms
Minimum Impedance:	4 Ohms
Recommended Amplifier Power:	20W-60W
Dimensions (WxDxH):	300x252x232mm
Net Weight:	6 kgs
Finishes:	matte black, black piano lacquer or white lacquer
Price:	£1,695

Distributor

Tom Tom Audio
phone: +44 (0)1727 893 928
www.tomtomaudio.com

Manufacturer

Guru Pro Audio
http://guruproaudio.com