

Wharfedale

D320 standmount loudspeaker



TECHNICAL ADVANCES HAVE

enabled new entry-level lines of compact speakers from several manufacturers that offer hi-fi credentials at an attractive price. We saw this with Monitor Audio's Monitor 50 standmount speaker (HFC 440) and now Wharfedale has done a similar thing with the introduction of its D300 Series.

The D320 is the larger of two standmount speakers from the new four-strong range. As you might expect, it borrows a number of parts from the company's popular Diamond 11 Series, but is intriguingly different in other aspects. The mid/bass driver is a 130mm woven Kevlar design partnered with a long-throw driver system that's also found on the current Diamond lineup, and has a lightweight foam surround to ensure that no energy is wasted.

Chamber of secrets

The tweeter is a 25mm soft-dome unit that's closely related to the version found in the Diamond 11. It is constructed inside its own chamber and designed to offer a wide frequency response and very even dispersion. A computer-designed crossover mates the two drivers together and a single set of speaker cable terminals are provided around the back.

The most interesting departure from usual Wharfedale design practise is the position of the bass port. This is on the underside of the cabinet so that it remains unaffected by proximity to walls. The disadvantage, such as it is, is that the D320 needs a stand top plate large enough to ensure that its feet sit correctly. The footprint isn't so large as to rule out many stands, though, and the Soundstyle Z60 that I habitually use works perfectly.

The D300 Series does without the tapered cabinets of the latest Diamond Series, but Wharfedale says the rounded edges help with standing waves and refraction. The front panel looks a little incongruous on the black cabinet review sample,



but makes more sense on the walnut finish (pictured). For £200 it is superbly made, although the supplied circular grilles are a little fiddly to fit.

Connected to a Naim Uniti Star one-box system (HFC 433), the design elegance extends to the way the D320 makes music and has an impressive lack of boxiness. Nils Frahm's *Wintermusik* is delivered with a

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soundstage that extends well beyond the cabinets. This combines with a depth and three dimensionality to the piano that many similarly priced speakers struggle to match.

Tonality is also good. This isn't a speaker that will find every last detail in a piece of music, but it delivers voices and instruments in a way that balances richness and refinement with enough treble detail to keep it sounding exciting.

Despite the promising downward-firing bass port, the bass response sounds good rather than great. The integration between the midrange and lower frequencies is seamless and there is no sign of bloat or overhang even with challenging material. In terms of outright bass extension, though, the D320 doesn't improve on rear or front-firing ported cabinet designs found at a similar price.

Satisfaction guaranteed

Where it does come into its own is with a remarkably accurate and neutral sound that handles all kinds of music styles without fear or favour. Furthermore, there is a sense of fun and energy to it when you play something with a little spark. A spirited rendition of Marina & The Diamonds *Are You Satisfied?* shows this off to great effect. The music is expertly handled, but there's a little extra sparkle in the presentation that engages on an emotional as well as cerebral level. Overall, this is a great little speaker that will perform well as part of any starter system. **ES**

DETAILS

PRICE
£200
WEBSITE
wharfedale.co.uk

OUR VERDICT

