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SPEAKER REVIEWS 03 / 05 / 07

## Group test: Standmount speakers £500-£1,200 part 1

By [Dave Oliver](#)

When choosing a standmount or bookshelf speaker over a floorstander, you're not looking for low-end grunt or sheer power to dig you out of any sonic holes. But what you do want is precise timing, taught bass and transparent detail through the mid and treble. We pulled in four top models with a variety of strengths and put them through their paces.

### Dali Mentor 1

Just launched at the beginning of the year, this is the baby in Danish manufacturer Dali's Mentor range and joins the larger 2 and 6 from last year.



Rather beautifully presented in cherry wood veneer it has a bass reflex port at the back, angled downward, and the plugs are designed for banana plugs or spade lugs, though they'll also take bare wires, as will all the other models here. It's nicely compact, with a 5in driver that handles the bass and mid duties decently enough, with a tight kick in the lower regions and sensitive portrayal of the midrange.

That unusual hybrid tweeter is striking, combining a 28mm soft dome and a 45mm ribbon to give it that extra bit of space at the really high end. It gives a reported frequency response of up to 34kHz and does an incredible job of pulling out the detail in the higher register.

Perhaps a little bit too good - you'll need to be careful with placement and height to get the best out of them. And if your system tends to be on the bright side anyway, these may not prove to be the ideal partner. That aside, this is a compact and graceful performer that delivers superbly.

#### Overview

**Price:** £1,000  
**More info:** [Dali](#)  
**Size (WxHxD):** 162x318x241mm  
**Weight:** 5.3kg  
**Drivers:** 1x 5in (13cm) mid/bass, 1x hybrid tweeter (28mm soft dome/17x45mm ribbon)  
**Frequency response:** 45Hz - 34kHz  
**Nominal impedance:** 6 Ohms  
**Power handling:** 120 Watts  
**Sensitivity:** 86dB/Watt  
**Finish:** Cherry

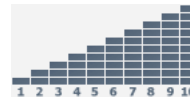
#### Verdict

##### Plus points

Spot-on timing, fabulously detailed hybrid tweeter

##### Minus points

Needs careful placement and matching to get the best from that hybrid tweeter



### Focal-JMLab Chorus 807 V

Focal-JMLab tends to offer a full range of size options with its speaker series and the Chorus is no exception. There are five stereo models in the midrange Chorus 800 V series (and the same for the cheaper Chorus 700 V series) and this is the larger of the two standmounts (the 806 is slightly smaller).



They're easily the biggest speakers in this test (a pair of the Tannoys could fit into each of them) and feature a powerful 7in polyglass mid/bass cone over a 4in bass port.

There's none of Focal's beryllium tweeter malarkey at this price point, but the inverted dome made from an 'aluminummagnesium' alloy, is very finely detailed, though with perhaps just a touch more nasality than we'd like. With the covers off especially, there's a terrific amount of detail on show, though there's also the feeling of a little bit of separation from the midrange picture.

The larger size means that it packed the most bass punch of anything else here, nothing woolly or undefined either, just the good sort - tight, controlled and powerful, though there's a chance that these hefty speakers were a tad overwhelming for the modestly sized room we were using for this test.

#### Overview

**Price:** £629  
**More info:** [Focal JMLab](#)  
**Size (WxDxH):** 237x333x448mm  
**Weight:** 10.1kg  
**Drivers:** 1x 7in (18cm) polyglass mid/bass, 1x 1" (25mm) TNV Al/Mg inverted dome tweeter  
**Frequency response:** 50Hz - 28kHz  
**Nominal impedance:** 8 Ohms  
**Power handling:** 160 Watts  
**Sensitivity:** 92dB/Watt  
**Finish:** Moka/ebony

#### Verdict

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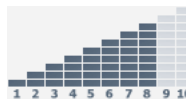
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**Plus points**

Plenty of low-end power and high-end detail, superb performance for the price






**Minus points**

Will tend to dominate smaller rooms, can be a hint of separation between the mid and high end



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SPEAKER REVIEWS 04 / 05 / 07

## Group test: Standmount speakers £500-£1,200 part 2

By [Dave Oliver](#)

Read our group test: Standmount speakers £500-£1,200 [part 1](#).

### Quad 12L2

Launched last autumn, the L2 series is designed to update Quad's popular L-series with new aluminium voice coils, new-look tweeter pod, improved chassis designed to cut down on midrange distortion and improved terminals, spikes and plinths.



The second biggest in the range, they're not the best looking of the bunch on test - big, room-dominating glossy boxes (our test pair came in piano black, which didn't help, although there's a range of less brutal-looking wood finishes) - they're not the shy and retiring type. They are however twin-ported at the rear and offer the opportunity of bi-wiring - the only one of these speakers to offer this.

Thankfully, the sound more than makes up for the lack of subtlety in the design. These speakers do a marvellous job of pulling together all the sonic elements to produce a beautifully presented sonic image. Plenty of punch from the mid/bass Kevlar driver, which exerts a strong degree of control on the low end while presenting the midrange beautifully, with insight and no little taste - you feel you can hear everything, but no element seems to dominate unnecessarily.

The tweeter meanwhile offers a marvellously transparent view of the higher frequencies and blends very smoothly with the rest of the sonic picture - it doesn't offer quite the same degree of space as some of the models here, particularly the Dali or the Focal, but the cohesion of the overall image is exemplary - it's a very fine speaker.

#### Overview

**Price:** £500  
**More info:** [Quad](#)  
**Size (WxHxD):** 205x330x253mm  
**Weight:** 6.9kg  
**Drivers:** 1x 6.5in (170mm) Kevlar cone mid/bass, 1x 1" (25mm) tweeter  
**Frequency response:** 45Hz - 28kHz  
**Nominal impedance:** 8 Ohms  
**Power handling:** 100 Watts  
**Sensitivity:** 88dB/Watt  
**Finish:** Piano black, rosewood, cherry, maple, bird's eye, silver

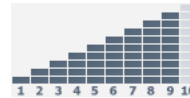
#### Verdict

##### Plus points

Marvellously integrated sonic image, no shortage of bass

##### Minus points

Unsubtle, blocky looks, tweeter can feel a bit 'shut in' with very high frequencies



### Tannoy Autograph Mini

Tannoy's deceptively small boxes are actually based on the first speaker the company ever produced, 50 years ago. That's not to say that they're antiques though - the look might be retro but the technology certainly isn't.

The rear of the cabinet is angled inwards, which not only serves to decrease the possibility of standing waves inside, but also allows closer placement within corners, if you're pushed for space.

The Autograph Minis deliver a beautifully presented soundstage - precise in its positioning and teasing out a wealth of detail in the midrange, without coming over as nerdily analytical. They deliver a rich, full sound, without the sense that bandwidth is being squashed. With acoustic music such as Gillian Welch's Soul Journey or Björk's vocal-only Medúlla album, the results are exemplary.

When you want to get heavier, say with Basement Jaxx's bass-heavy Good Luck, they still hold things beautifully together - some will miss the distinct lack of bass punch, but this is a small speaker, and as a great man once said, 'Ye cannae change the laws of physics'.

Placing them close to the wall helps boost the low end slightly, but even without the bass reach of some of the models here, when it comes to precision, accuracy and cohesion, they punch well above their (very light) weight.

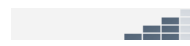


#### Overview

**Price:** £1,200  
**More info:** [Tannoy](#)  
**Size (WxHxD):** 210x345x130mm  
**Weight:** 4kg  
**Drivers:** 1x 4" (100mm) mixed fibre pulp cone, 1x 3/4" (19mm) titanium dome with neodymium magnet system  
**Frequency response:** 68Hz - 54kHz  
**Nominal impedance:** 8 Ohms  
**Power handling:** 200 Watts  
**Sensitivity:** 88dB/Watt  
**Finish:** Teak

#### Verdict

##### Plus points



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Very small and compact, distinctive retro look, beautifully precise sound

**Minus points**

Distinctive retro look, not much bass punch, not cheap

**Final verdict**

A very fine bunch of speakers this, and as ever, there are horses for courses. The Focal-JMLab Chorus 807 Vs certainly have their place but it probably wasn't in our listening room. These big and bulky numbers certainly made their presence felt but lacked the ability to pull the sound together in a rewarding way, though a larger room (or the smaller 806 version) might have helped.

The Tannoy Autograph Mini is a beautiful little speaker if your tastes run to the middle of the last century. And even if they don't, they're a classy looking performer that put out a beguilingly cohesive picture, albeit one that's lacking in low-end throb. The Quad 12L2 is a very fine speaker that presents a superbly cohesive sonic picture, albeit without quite the nth detail in the high-end or low-end punch of some of the others here.

But it's the Dali Mentor 1 that takes the honours on the day. It makes a virtue of its emphasis on the higher range with its unusual hybrid tweeter but also proved to be a fine all-rounder, though you'll need to take care to partner it with sympathetic electronics.



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