



Piega Classic 3.0 **£900**

This entry-level standmount looks like other brands' premium offerings, and that's only the start of it

DETAILS

PRODUCT
Piega Classic 3.0

ORIGIN
Switzerland

TYPE
2-way standmount
loudspeaker

WEIGHT
7.7kg

DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
210 x 340 x 280mm

FEATURES
● Air Motion
Transformer HF unit
● 180mm MDS
mid/bass driver
● Quoted sensitivity:
89dB/1W/1m

DISTRIBUTOR
Piega Loudspeakers
(UK) Ltd

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WEBSITE
piega.co.uk

Big in Switzerland, this Zurich-based speaker manufacturer has only recently come to the UK, enlisting a number of specialist audio retailers to demonstrate its wares. The company certainly has form when it comes to ribbon tweeter technology. Its Linear Drive Ribbon (LDR) coaxial tweeter was the first unit to reach low enough to handle some midrange duties, obviating the need for a dome/ribbon hybrid.

Like the Classic 5.0 (*HFC 417*), the 3.0 uses a hefty but conventionally square-cornered wood and fibreboard enclosure with a rear-firing reflex port and a single pair of good-quality binding posts. It shares its Air Motion Transformer (the AMT-1) high-frequency unit, which employs an extremely thin pleated and partially embossed foil diaphragm and combines the advantages of a traditional ribbon with the cost-effective production of a dome tweeter. The mid/bass band is handled by Piega's long-throw 180mm MDS driver.

The Classic 3.0 is chunky, but it looks classy and expensive, finished in a piano black deep gloss lacquer. Piano white and polished Macassar ebony are also available.

Sound quality

My assumption that the Classic 3.0 would sound a lot like the Classic 5.0 without the fulsome bass couldn't be further from the truth. Yes, high

frequencies are just as silky, open and richly textured. And yes, levels of colouration and distortion are as low as the resolution of fine detail is impressively high. But the overall top-to-bottom balance is quite different. Put simply, the Classic 3.0 has a revved-up bass response and slightly subdued and recessed midband and, therefore, a significant realigned presentation.

The prescriptive balance has a fairly dramatic effect on Amy Winehouse's voice, which sounds sweeter but smaller than usual against the pumped and rather sumptuous lower frequencies previously only hinted at by the Acoustic Insight. True, the female backing vocals are almost heavenly, yet it all ends up coming over a bit candle-lit dinner.

Bass, again, tends to dominate the tautly propulsive Marcus Miller/Dr John outing. Its weighty presence is welcome enough, but the shape, definition and agility exhibited by most of the other speakers here is rather lacking. It's a shame because what's going on upstairs is clear, clean, organised, well timed and beautifully resolved – an open window on Miller's immaculate production values. And the tweeter is very easy on the ear. Intricacy isn't the problem here, but dynamic expression could be better. Interestingly, this doesn't really hurt Tony Williams' artful cymbal bashing, which seems scintillatingly real. But the tom-toms, strangely, sound a tad synthetic ●

A KEEN TWEETER

Piega is the Italian word for folded. So it's no surprise that when the company came to hi-fi in 1986 with a box of fresh initiatives and materials, its big idea was a new type of ribbon tweeter – called the Linear Drive Ribbon – that, over the next 14 years evolved first into a treble/midrange ribbon system and then into what is claimed to be "the world's first coaxial ribbon system". The practical upshot was a large ribbon panel that reached down far lower than conventional ribbon tweeters, allowing easier integration with dynamic drivers that could be freed to do what they do best (bass and lower midrange). What seems particularly Swiss, however, is the intricate, painstaking labour that's poured into making every ribbon. The work is so precise and exacting, it can only be carried out in a room with carefully maintained climatic conditions at Piega's factory.

It might be chunky, but it also looks classy



Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY



LIKE: Smooth, sophisticated sound; fine tweeter; superior build and finish

VALUE FOR MONEY



DISLIKE: Prominent bass balance

BUILD QUALITY



WE SAY: A sumptuous-sounding speaker with great insight, but heavy-handed bass

EASE OF DRIVE



OVERALL

