

## EQUIPMENT REVIEW

# Guru QM60 loudspeaker

by Jason Kennedy

**Y**ou may recall the Guru QM10, a standmount with an unusual wider than it is high shape and a pair of rather down to earth looking drive units. Unconventional, yet highly entertaining in a slightly colourful fashion, it is easily capable of reinvigorating a tired record collection. But it's somewhat limited in the power department. Guru has added a floorstander to its range that counters the QM10's shortcomings. The new QM60 stands just under a metre high and has a step in the front baffle which provides time alignment of the voice coils in the two drive units.

This step is 40mm deep and must create a lot of extra diffusion from both the tweeter above it whose output will bounce straight up and the mid/bass unit beneath it whose output will diffract off the hard edge. This should have the effect of enlarging soundstage height at the expense of image focus. I put this to Guru designer Ingvar Öhman who explained that it is designed to reflect high frequencies toward the ceiling which increases the vertical listening window so that the speaker should sound as good to someone standing as it does to a seated listener. The baffle shape is also designed to compensate for the shortcomings of stereo reproduction, specifically the fact that a phantom image is a construct created by two sources as opposed to the point source you have in reality. A singer only has one voice, but stereo systems attempt to recreate this with two sources which is bound to have its limitations and that's something which Guru is trying to overcome.

The QM60 was originally designed to research the properties of human hearing. Öhman lectures on this subject when he's not designing speakers – and it's what begat Guru speakers in the first place. What differentiates his design approach is that as well as aiming for neutrality, wide bandwidth and accurate reproduction of timbre Öhman also attempts to compensate for the colourations of the source and amplification. I have rarely heard a loudspeaker that has lower colouration than a digital source and solid state amplification, but such components do of course have characteristics which distort the signal in a small but distinct fashion. This might explain the QM60's slightly warm midband which serves to play down some of the grain that you get with some electronics.

As with the QM10 this speaker is a two-way design which is unusual in such a substantial box, what's more surprising is the crossover point which the drivers work



▶ around. This is less of a point than an area that starts at 700Hz and goes up to 7kHz, so the roll-off for each driver is extremely shallow indeed, the company refers to it merely as a 'non textbook function'. I did wonder whether Guru was using any filtering at all but Öhman explained that there's a low pass filter on the woofer in order to increase power handling. The tweeter's filter is also designed to fight power compression by using impedance matching. In practice this means that the large 176mm woofer has to cover an awful lot of ground, over eight octaves in fact. This is not unique, there have been other speakers that have done something similar with the purpose of increasing both sensitivity and power handling by reducing the work load placed on the tweeter, but it's asking a lot of the drive unit. Guru admits as much and says that the titanium bobbin controls heat distribution and eliminates low frequency eddy losses while copper plated aluminium wire for the voice coil, a double vented dust cap cavity and an undercut pole piece all combine to linearise drive force. In order to reproduce higher frequencies the SPN dust cap acts as a dome midrange, Guru describes SPN as "a plastic material that is a little bit less stiff than polypropylene, is very lightweight, has excellent internal damping behaviour, and can take a lot of heat without changing its behaviour".

Not much is said about the tweeter but it's apparent that it's a 28mm soft dome mounted in a horn to increase sensitivity, beyond that it does not seem particularly different to the norm. Except that is in claimed power handling which is said to be close to 100 watts.

Given the size of the box and the main driver, sensitivity does not seem particularly high, it's specified at 88dB for a nominal 7 ohm impedance. The

box isn't quite as large as it appears because the bottom six inches are taken up by a void into which a downward firing reflex port vents, this is why there are a grilles at the front and sides of the cabinet. However there is no grille for the shiny black baffle.

Guru recommends the speakers be placed with the inner corner very close to the rear wall and the cabinets angled so that you can just see their outside edges. This combined with the space under the speaker means that the way that the bass interacts with the room can to some extent be predicted. It does its best to minimize the effect of the walls with foam feet that offer a degree of de-coupling, Guru is not keen on spikes and doesn't supply threaded inserts for that purpose. Cable connection is made via a single pair of inputs that accept only banana plugs and sit near the top of the cabinet. This approach minimizes internal wiring but does mean you need more speaker cable and it hangs out of the back of an otherwise attractive piece of furniture.

Dispersion was a strongpoint with the QM10 and so it remains here, the QM60 projecting a full size image that reaches up and over the speakers themselves. It's not out of scale however, you can get large but rather soft imaging from some speakers but this is not like that, in fact it's on a similar scale to the larger B&W 802D speakers I use as a reference. They create a more precisely etched image but in terms of size and placement of musicians the two are very close. The Guru does have a warm midband compared with most of the loudspeakers that I have heard in recent times. And this gives it a comfortable sound that works well at both high and low levels but which is perhaps better suited to the former. It's reminiscent of many classic speakers from back in the day, AR bookshelves from the 1970s come to mind – two-way speakers that also had a largish woofer albeit not the sort of power handling or bandwidth on offer here.

It's a balance that seems to work well with Naim electronics even when you use a ▶



▶ speaker cable other than Naim NACA5 which pushes leading edges a little too far forward for my tastes. I was fortunate enough to use the QM60 with a full Naim 500 system and got some remarkable musical entertainment out of the combo. Give it a tune with some density to work with and it pulls out the music in tremendously coherent and engaging form. I particularly enjoyed Fred Frith's take on the classic 'Killing Floor Blues', he gets so much attack out of an acoustic guitar that it almost hurts. In fact it would do if played at high level through a less forgiving speaker.

This system proved remarkably adept at revealing the musical qualities of everything I played, which was good with the good stuff but less so with tracks that are primarily used for assessing the sound of a system or component. Not necessarily material selected for its musical appeal, after all no one wants to wear out a great tune by picking it to pieces *ad infinitum*.

The soundscape does not merely extend upwards, with the right recording it expands sideways as well, reaching out to the sides of the room and providing a broad expanse for the music to project from. This was clear when playing the slower pieces from the double bass led Avishai Cohen Trio. Usually it's the more dynamic and muscular playing that appeals on this album (*Gently Disturbed*) but this system revealed the message within the more subtle pieces with skill.

Tonally it is on the rich side with a smooth top end, slightly dark midband and bass that is prodigious and fulsome. So much so that it can get the floor going with certain material and certain floors - wooden rather than concrete, I suspect it would suit the former rather better. This means that you get more bass at low levels, something that many loudspeakers struggle to deliver and also that at high levels the mid and treble are always balanced by the bass rather than the sound becoming mid forward as is often the case. As with all things it depends on the music, Steely Dan's 'Bodhisattva' from the remastered *Countdown to Ecstasy* album sounds its age while the bass seems a little pumped up but there's plenty of power on tap and the result is captivating. Engrossing in another way was Gillian Welch's *Time (The Revelator)*, which is a good if not stunning recording, however in the Gurus hands it transcends the boundaries of time and space and places the singer right in the room.

The Guru QM60 is as different a speaker as its smaller sibling. The mid is a little warm and shut in by most standards and it's not as focused as some of the competition when it comes to leading edge definition. On the other hand, it does deliver the level that Guru suggests and can produce an awful lot of low-end welly, which makes it a lot of fun. Dynamic range is also wide so you hear the full impact of the music's crescendos without compression. More important is the way it places the emphasis on the musical message so much more effectively than more analytical speakers. In this respect it has a lot in common with Naim electronics with which it seems to gel so well. Ingvar Öhman says "My ambition has never been to make loudspeakers that 'create sound' for people chasing spectacular experiences." And this product lives up to that by putting the music rather than the sound at the forefront, which makes it a speaker that will appeal to the music lover a little more than the average hi-fi nut. +



## TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Guru QM60

**Sensitivity:** 88dB

**Nominal impedance:** 7Ω (min 6Ω).

**Mean value:** 10Ω

**Recommended amplifier power:** 10W-250W

**Enclosure type:** Helmholtz resonator

**Drivers:** 1×28 mm (1.1in) dome tweeter, 1×176mm (6.9 in) doped polymer cone

**Dimensions (WxDxH):** 312×351×945mm

**Net weight:** 30 kg

**Finishes:** matte black, black piano laquer, white lacquer or a selection of veneers (reviewed in zebrano)

**Price:** £6,995

**Manufacturer:**

Guru Pro Audio

**URL:** [www.guruproaudio.com](http://www.guruproaudio.com)

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Tom Tom Audio

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