



Roth OLi 50 £400 ★★☆☆☆

It's true what they say: if something seems too good to be true, that's usually because it's too good to be true. And the Roth OLi 50s are an excellent example.

At first acquaintance, they're a prodigious sight. At 122cm tall (and that's without plinths or spikes) they tower over every price-comparable rival, and their array of no less than five drivers (a 50mm ribbon tweeter flanked by a pair of 165mm mid/bass drivers, plus two similarly sized bass drivers) make quite a statement. Peek around the back and there are a couple of bass reflex ports of ample diameter. If you don't have a big room to put them in, you can cross them off your list right now, tempting though the sheer quantity of raw materials might be at the price.

Let's assume that you have the space to let them breathe, though. What your £400 buys you is a somewhat coarse performance - a run through Bob Marley's *Lively Up Yourself* should be packed with subtlety, but the OLi 50s sadly seem to miss the point. There's no doubting the scale the Roths are capable of, and they take significant dynamic upheavals in their stride - but overall they're a shouty, ill-disciplined and ultimately tiring listen. The highest frequencies are rather thick and poorly defined, and are swamped by a midrange that's entirely too forward and drowns out other frequencies. At the bottom end, the OLi 50s sound very much like they look: big, brash and not even remotely manoeuvrable.

All the more nuanced aspects of speaker performance - integration, focus, timing - are sacrificed in the interests of shifting impressive quantities of air, and as a result the OLi 50s are a speaker far more interesting to look at than to listen to.

Rating ★★☆☆☆

FOR Lots of speaker for the money; big low-frequency presence; dynamic

AGAINST Coarse, ill-defined sound; easily confused by complex recordings

VERDICT Twice as much speaker for your money, but only half the performance



Tannoy Mercury V4 £380 ★★★★★

We were impressed by the Mercury V4s from the get-go (our April 2011 issue, in this instance), and have basically been waiting for enough price-comparable opposition the present itself before flinging them into a *Group Test*. Happily, it's been well worth the wait.

They look nothing special on the showroom floor, the V4s - they're adequately finished, but orange is orange no matter how many times you call it Sugar Maple - though the complement of drivers (25mm polyester dome tweeter and a pair of 150mm paper mid/bass drivers) is promising. We reckon the Mission MX3s offer a little more pride of ownership, though obviously the Tannoys look and feel a cut or two above the Quadrals.

They do their best work out in the room, and biwired. Pandered to that far, the Tannoys offer a winning combination of scale, authority, clarity and low-frequency acuity. Playing Miles Davis' *Dear Old Stockholm*, they generate an open, focused and completely convincing stage, and demonstrate a composed, natural way with rhythm and tempo. There's ample detail revealed, the midrange communicates articulately and the V4s retain the bulk of their composure even at quite unrealistic volume levels. Integration between the drivers is smooth, and low frequencies are controlled effortlessly. Treble sounds sparkle too, but take an awful lot of provoking before becoming problematic.

It's possible to wrong-foot them, of course - back them too close to a wall and the bottom end blooms a little - but for a speaker of this type, and at this price, the Mercury V4s pretty much hit the bull's-eye. They sound forthright and subtle, clear and clean - everything you want from a budget floorstander, in fact, with very few of the usual budget caveats.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Spacious, full-scale sound; detail, timing and integration all impress

AGAINST Don't appreciate being close to a rear wall; not the most luxurious finish

VERDICT As safe or as feisty as you require, the V4s are across-the-board charmers

TEST VERDICT

THE WINNER

Tannoy Mercury V4 £380 ★★★★★

Two other pairs of speakers gave them a run for their money, but the excellent value and detailed, dynamic performance offered by the **Tannoy Mercury V4s** goes to show that you can get large-scale stereo sound, and impressive looks, without having to spend a fortune.



SYSTEM BUILDER

Perfect partners for the cracking Tannoys



AMPLIFIER
Yamaha A-5500
£330 ★★★★★



SOURCE
Cambridge Audio NP30
£400 ★★★★★



SPEAKER CABLE
Chord Company Carnival Silver Screen
£6/m ★★★★★

We seem to have spent a good deal of time over the past few years bemoaning the lack of worthwhile entry-level floorstanders. Well, that grumble won't be resurfacing any time soon - because there are four pairs of modestly priced floorstanders here that are well worth consideration over similarly priced standmounters.

Mind you, there are a couple you shouldn't touch with the proverbial bargepole. The Roth OLi 50s will probably be the most difficult to banish from your mind - after all, the showroom appeal of all that cabinet, and all those drivers, is hard to deny. But unless you fancy a speaker that demands an awful lot of room only to fall down when it comes to conveying nuance and emotion, you'll steer well clear. Equally undeserving of your time are Quadral's

Quintas 404s - despite their decent scale and midrange, their ill-defined bass and cheap feel build certainly don't impress.

It's far better to stick to the competent speakers here. Dali's Zensor 5s, for example, have looks, dimensions and finish on their side - and when it comes

The three five-star recipients on test here all have plenty to offer - but if it was our money, we'd go for the excellent Tannoy Mercury V4s

to clean, full-scale and detailed sounds, they're right on the money. Only a slight lack of perceived excitement, and a definite lack of rigour on entry into low-frequency sounds, prevents them from muscling their way to the top table.

The three five-star recipients all have plenty to offer, and you won't get much of an argument from us no matter which you choose. The Mission MX3s have price, looks and peppy dynamism, after all, and the Monitor Audio Bronze BX5s are sophisticated in looks, unflappably precise in sound and able to turn their hand to more-or-less anything.

If it was our money we were spending, though, we'd go for Tannoy's Mercury V4s (though probably not in the orange finish). They have the BX5s' fidelity without that hint of prissiness, and they boast the coherence of the MX3s but on a larger, more open scale - all for less than £400. They're a great buy.

For a full list of specifications and other useful info visit whathifi.com

Facts & figures



Dali Zensor 5
£500 ★★★★★

Type Floorstanders • Sensitivity 88dB/W/m • Impedance 6 ohms • Max power handling 150W • Biwirable No • Finishes 2 • Dimensions (hwd) 84 x 16 x 27cm



Mission MX3
£350 ★★★★★

Type Floorstanders • Sensitivity 90dB/W/m • Impedance 8 ohms • Max power handling 120W • Biwirable Yes • Finishes 4 • Dimensions (hwd) 85 x 17 x 25cm



Monitor Audio Bronze BX5
£500 ★★★★★

Type Floorstanders • Sensitivity 89dB/W/m • Impedance 8 ohms • Max power handling 150W • Biwirable Yes • Finishes 4 • Dimensions (hwd) 82 x 17 x 34



Quadral Quintas 404
£410 ★★★★★

Type Floorstanders • Sensitivity 89dB/W/m • Impedance 8 ohms • Max power handling 240W • Biwirable No • Finishes 1 • Dimensions (hwd) 85 x 20 x 21cm



Roth OLi 50
£400 ★★★★★

Type Floorstanders • Sensitivity 92dB/W/m • Impedance 8 ohms • Max power handling 250W • Biwirable Yes • Finishes 2 • Dimensions (hwd) 122 x 21 x 41cm



Tannoy Mercury V4
£380 ★★★★★

Type Floorstanders • Sensitivity 91dB/W/m • Impedance 8 ohms • Max power handling 200W • Biwirable Yes • Finishes 2 • Dimensions (hwd) 97 x 20 x 28cm