

Highland Oran 4305



£600

Now wash your hands

Like any piece of good furniture, you have to look after the finish of any of these speakers. The Highlands have a smart veneer, and unlike some, it doesn't pick up finger marks.

Quality stereo sound

Putting the tweeter between the two bass drivers makes for good dispersion – spread of sound, in other words. This results in a wide and stable stereo image.

Come tumbling down

These are tall and slim loudspeakers. They come with plinths that increase the footprint. But if you have kids, watch out, because they can still be knocked over quite easily.



THIS IS THE type of speaker many people will like. The Oran 4305s – catchy name, eh? – are unobtrusive tower speakers that aren't particularly fussy as to where you position them. A free-space location is ideal, but the speakers' tightly controlled bass stays well behaved even when close to a wall.

Highland has decided on the 'more is better' approach on the drive-unit front. That slim cabinet won't accept

"It's a very articulate and direct sound that has you delving into your music"

anything larger than a 12cm unit, so the design uses a pair of them compensate.

These aren't any old drivers, either. The twin mid/bass drivers use a ceramic-coated metal cone for its rigidity, and ability to get closer to perfect piston motion than most alternatives. In theory, if a cone doesn't bend when it moves, then it'll reproduce the sound

FOR
Direct, well-timed presentation, slim and unobtrusive cabinet; solid build

AGAINST
Not the most authoritative speaker around; strength of the competition

VERDICT
Another good pair of speakers from Highland: with a bit more insight and stronger dynamics, they could worry the class-leaders

more accurately. A titanium-dome tweeter sits between the two larger drivers, and the arrangement produces a loudspeaker with wide dispersion and a stable stereo image.

How do all those drivers perform?
Like other Highland speakers we've heard recently, this tower trades warmth for a faster and more agile performance.

It doesn't quite have the authority to carry off the likes of Sibelius's *Karelia Suite* with the same skill as rivals such as Monitor Audio's excellent RS6s.

However, compensation comes in the form of an articulate and direct performance that encourages you to delve further into the music. Dynamics are forceful, and timing is respectably crisp, too. Add it all up, and you have a speaker that is equally at home with Prince's funky *3121* as it is with Frank Sinatra singing *Come Fly With Me*.

So with that broad spread of talent, why don't the 4305s claim the full five-star rating? Well, it's more a case of the

competition being particularly talented, than a case of the Highlands being deeply flawed in any respect.

Judged by the highest standards, there is more detail in recordings than the 4305s can reveal, and a shade more dynamic subtlety, too. The shortfalls aren't massive, but they're enough for us to take a star off the 4305s' rating.

Tested with

Prokofiev – Romeo & Juliet



This is one of our favourite classical discs to test with, and even a brief listen will reveal why. This is a **very well engineered** recording, and is tonally even. It also has everything from a large-scale sound to broad dynamics and complex arrangements. If a speaker hasn't got decent detail resolution or a suitably powerful presentation, the **whole thing will fall flat**. Highland's Oran 4305s are good enough to revel in the more muscular sections, and thankfully have the finesse to **make the most of the subtler bits**.

FACTS AND FIGURES

			TYPE	BIWIRE	SENSITIVITY (dB/w/m)	IMPEDANCE	POWER-HANDLING	BASS-TUNING	DIMENSIONS (HWD)	WEIGHT (kg)	FINISHES
ATC SCM7 £ 600 www.atc.gb.net 01285 760561		★★★★★ ★★★★★ SOUND The SCM7s deliver a forthright and detailed sound. The tonal balance is even, though we'd like greater rhythmic snap and dynamic finesse	standmount	●	84	8	90	sealed box	30x16x23cm	7	1
EPOS M12.2 £ 450 www.epos-acoustics.com 01442 260146		★★★★★ ★★★★★ SOUND Want fast and dynamic speakers that time like a metronome? Buy these. We're sure you'll love them	standmount	●	87	8	120	rear-ported	38x20x25cm	8	3
HIGHLAND ORAN 4305 £ 600 www.highland-audio.com 0870 909 6777		★★★★★ ★★★★★ SOUND It's a little lean in the bass, and lacks a bit of midrange warmth, but in most other areas, the 4305's sound is admirable	floorstander	●	87	6	90	two rear ports	102x14x31cm	15	3
HYPERION HWS-586 £ 500 www.hyperionsound.com 0870 909 6777		★★★★★ ★★★★★ SOUND Look past their laid-back presentation, and there's much to like here. Particularly good stereo-imaging	standmount		89	6	100	Front slot port	38x23x26cm	8	2
KEFiQ7 £ 600 www.kef.co.uk 01622 672261		★★★★★ ★★★★★ SOUND These large-scale KEFs are authoritative, but suffer from lazy dynamics and lack of rhythmic precision compared to the best	floorstander	●	90	8	150	ported	87x22x33cm	14	4
MONITOR AUDIO SILVER RS6 £ 600 www.monitoraudio.co.uk 01268 740580		★★★★★ ★★★★★ SOUND These marry the agility of a good standmount with the authority of a floorstander. These are very good all-rounders	floorstander	●	90	8	150	ported	87x22x33cm	18	4
QUAD 12L2 £ 500 www.quad-hifi.co.uk 08454 580011		★★★★★ ★★★★★ SOUND The 12L2s produce a very clean and detailed sound. Could do with stronger dynamics and crisper timing, though	standmount	●	88	6	200	rear-ported	35x21x25cm	7	5

TYPE Speakers will be either standmounted or floorstanding. The former are designed to sit on dedicated speaker stands. For speakers in this price bracket, a support costing £100-£150 is suitable. This is why the floorstanders are all more expensive than the

standmounts, so a direct comparison can be made. **BIWIRING** You need speakers with two sets of inputs and a split crossover, then send twin sets of speaker cable from the amplifier to each speaker **SENSITIVITY** The sound-pressure level that the

speaker will produce for 1w. Higher figures show it's easier to drive, while speakers with lower figures may well need a more powerful amplifier to drive them to loud volumes. **IMPEDANCE** The load the speakers present to an amplifier. Low impedance

draws more current from the amp, potentially giving problems for less-powerful hi-fi amplifiers. **POWER-HANDLING** The maximum safe power for the speakers – though, note that it's easier to damage speakers with an under-powered amp that's

distorting because it's working too hard than with too much power. **BASS-TUNING** Rear-firing ports suggest that a speaker is happiest away from a rear wall, set out in the room. Front-ported speakers are more flexible about room placement, and

are a better choice if your available space is limited. Sealed-box enclosures, like the ATCs, are also fine in this context. Finally, the slotted port used by the Hyperions can reduce obvious port noise, sometimes referred to as a chuffing sound.