

Key Features

- ✘ Five channel speaker system
- ✘ Two-way floorstanding main speakers
- ✘ D'Appolito-layout centre speaker
- ✘ Dipole rear speakers
- ✘ Front speakers magnetically shielded
- ✘ Ported 100W active subwoofer
- ✘ All front speakers feature twin ports
- ✘ All speakers impedance 4-8 ohms
- ✘ Main speakers sensitivity 90dB
- ✘ Centre speaker sensitivity 87dB
- ✘ Rear speakers 88dB

Connections

- ✘ Mains: bi-wired gold-plated speaker terminals
- ✘ Centre/surrounds: single wired gold plated speaker terminals

Dimensions

- ✘ Mains: 800(h) x 200(d) x 160(w)mm
- ✘ Centre: 118(h) x 180(d) x 430(w)mm
- ✘ Surrounds: 234(h) x 147(d) x 200(w)mm
- ✘ Sub: 370(h) x 370(d) x 370(h)mm



£480

Gale Series 30

Alan Sircom asks: can a budget package from an audio great cut it against sat/sub?

GALE IS ONE OF THE GRAND OLD NAMES IN Brit-fi, rescued from obscurity by Audio Partnership, part of the Richer Sounds Empire. They were the must-have speakers of the 1970s, but then the brand evaporated, so AP stepped in to annex and re-invent it as a budget specialist.

It's somewhat overshadowed by other names, however, including stable-mate Mordaunt-Short. It shouldn't be: Gale continues to make excellent products at ludicrously low prices. The Series 30 system here is a typical example.

This system comprises a pair of tall, potent floorstanders, a centre channel and a pair of bipolar side speakers, all of which look the part. The 3030 two-way floorstanders cost just £150, the 3050c centre costs £120 and the rear 3060b speakers cost just £100. At least in theory; in reality the centre is sold at £100 and the rears at £80, making a total full-sized five channel speaker system for just £330. Finally, the matching 3080 cuboid subwoofer costs just £150, making a full 5.1 system for £480 all in.

Don't expect groundbreaking technology within the speakers. They all use paper cone bass drive units (a single 140mm driver in the 3030, and a pair of 90mm units in both the 3050c and 3060b), they all sport fabric dome tweeter units (a 25mm in

the floorstanders, 19mm units elsewhere), they all have simple first order crossover networks and they all have identical 4-8 ohms impedance figures and very similar sensitivity ratings.

The floorstanding 3030 is the most sensitive of the bunch, rated at 90dB, but the 3060b (at 88dB) and the 3050c (at 87dB) don't lag far behind and can be happily driven by even the weediest AV receiver. All three designs use comparatively thin MDF cabinets, keeping the weight and price low. The only big difference is between the front three ported, shielded designs and the rear. The surround speakers are sealed boxes and need no shielding. More importantly, they are bipole designs, so must be used as side speakers, but Gale's £120 3020 bookshelves are a good replacement for those who must have rear-mounted speakers.

The main speakers knock out good, clean bass; not too deep, but fast and tidy enough to be used in music and movies alike. This means the rather boomy sub can be bypassed for stereo, which keeps our hi-fi purist brethren happy. The balance from the front speakers is bright, clean and forward. This makes the cinema sound exciting, but can prove grating when used with cheap amplifiers and edge-of-the-seat blockbusters.

There is a slight integration issue from front to back. Tonally, the 3060b sounds different to the 3030 and 3050c. They have the same light and bright character, but the rears have a woodiness to the sound. How does this manifest? Compare the sounds of the two sniper rifles in *Enemy at the Gates*. Ed Harris's makes a crisp sharp 'crack' while Jude Law's makes a deeper, barking sound. The rear speakers sort of change Harris's gun into Law's, whereas the front speakers do the opposite. These are not dramatic shifts in tonal balance, though.

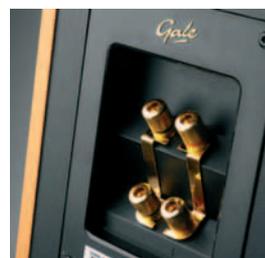
One thing shines out with the Gale system, though. For the cost of a sat/sub system, these offer proper big speaker sound and performance. Which makes it all the more of a bargain.

What we like about these speakers

- Big performance
- Crisp, exciting sound
- Main speakers have hi-fi cred

What we don't like about these speakers

- Discrepancy between mains and rears
- Slightly boomy sub



"The main speakers knock out good bass"

Essential HomeCinema Verdict

Gale Series 30

Sales 0207 940 2222
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EASE OF USE	★★★★★
LOOKS	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
SOUND	★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★★

VERDICT The sub booms a bit and the front-back integration is a little iffy, but Gale's System 30 means you can get full-sized speakers for less than half a grand.

Overall ★★★★★

BEST RIVALS

Mordaunt-Short Premiere ★★★★★
Polk Audio R Series ★★★★★
Elac Cinema XL ★★★★★