



# NEAT MOTIVE SX3

£1045 ★★★★★

**It's not unfair** to expect big things from speakers as small as the Neat Motive SX3s - not when their five-star predecessors, the Motive 3s, have kept us entertained for several years.

## Natural tonality

In walnut, black oak, natural oak or satin white finishes, the SX3s retain the distinct 'Motive' look. There are two obvious differences: on the front, the black grille mounts have been ditched for a cleaner façade - a welcome improvement. Swivel them around and you'll notice single terminals this time round, although a second set of bi-wiring terminals are available on request (for a fee, of course).

The original titanium dome tweeter has made way for a new aluminium unit - black-anodised for stiffness - which Neat says brings more natural tonality and a sweeter high-frequency response. It's now also separately enclosed from the mid/bass driver to minimise interference. The crossover has been upgraded with components which Neat

The SX3s retain the Motive look, but now feature a single set of terminals as standard



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suggests are closer in quality to its higher-ranging models. Cabinet bracing has been improved to reduce colouration, with minor bass tweaks for more control and extension.

## Small, but still punchy

As you'd expect, cabinets no bigger than two encyclopaedias back-to-back can't summon the horsepower of their larger peers. The atmospheric thunderstorm of Dire Straits' *Brothers in Arms* isn't quite so looming as when hollered out from KEF's R300s or ATC's SCM11s.

Still, they more than exceed expectations for their size: soaring guitars can be felt overhead, never feeling restricted for space. Couple that with impressive detail and dynamics, and a hugely expressive midrange.

The real pinnacle of the Motive SX3s' talents is their true devotion to having a good time. Play Macklemore & Ryan Lewis's *Wings* and they don't need spurring on, pelting through the propulsive rhythms with crisp timing. The vocals are full of conviction

and dynamism, while the dense instrumentals that weave around them never sound convoluted or ill-timed. Add to that fast, insightful mids, a pithy, clear treble and taut, punchy bass. The rear-ported SX3s sound more solid with support from a rear wall, and of course putting them on decent stands and giving them no less than 24 hours' run-in will seal the deal.

## Full of attitude

The Neat Motive SX3s may be small, but they're full of attitude. If you're tight on space or don't need an overpowering sound, these articulate, fun-loving speakers should be on your shortlist.

## Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Musical, fun delivery; crisp timing; precise rhythms; fluid dynamics; strict tonal balance; expressive mids; space-saving design

**AGAINST** Rivals have greater power and scale

**VERDICT** These small, innately musical speakers are bags of fun