

Spendors strike the right notes

STEREO SPEAKERS
SPENDOR
A9
★★★★★
£ 3995

Look beyond the austere looks and unremarkable spec sheet; these intricately engineered A9 floorstanders sound so clean and agile, they're four grand well spent

↑ FOR

Amazingly clean and transparent sound; agility, seamless integration; relatively unfussy about positioning

↓ AGAINST

We've heard weightier bass for this kind of size and money; can sound clinical if poorly partnered

→ VERDICT

Another excellent Spendor speaker. It may look relatively ordinary but there's much to impress in this performance

IT'S EASY TO underestimate a speaker like Spendor's A9. After all, it costs four grand and looks ordinary.

But, as always, it's all about the engineering details. Spendor makes its drive units (bar the tweeter) in-house rather than sourcing them from an OEM supplier. This gives its engineers a freer hand as a drive unit can be designed for a particular job. Spendor has done much work on cone materials and settled for a polypropylene cone for the midrange unit and Kevlar for the twin bass drivers.

The 103cm tall cabinet is strategically braced and the port is a well-proven slot design the brand has used for years. Its advantage is that it contributes to a decent bass output without making the speakers particularly fussy about positioning.

Up and running, the A9's bass is taut and agile, perhaps trading sheer quantity for the ability to track a fast-moving bassline with precision. Don't get us wrong: spin Massive Attack's *Heligoland* and there's no denying the punch on tap. Notes are

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tightly defined with no overhang, while bass textures are beautifully described. But those hoping to get their innards rearranged are in for a mild letdown: the A9 is just not that type of speaker. That said, the speakers that do deliver oodles of bass weight couldn't hold a candle to the Spendor's low-frequency agility.

Move up the frequency range and these speakers continue to impress. Voices display intimacy and insight, while high-frequency detail comes through with pristine clarity, much bite and lacks nothing for refinement. There's an impressive amount of communication and an unswerving ability to reveal the inner workings of a recording.

What the A9s are not is sweet or overtly smooth in any way. If your kit veers towards brightness or harshness, you'll know about it. Also, in nature these speakers err towards analysis. If you want an easy, comfortable listen, look elsewhere.

Pleasingly, however, the A9 hasn't lost the naturalness of past Spendor models, and it's that quality, more than any other, that separates this floorstander from its rivals. Match with care, and we're sure you'll be impressed. **★**



TYPE Three-way floorstander
TWEETER 29mm wide-surround soft dome
MIDRANGE 15cm Spendor in-house EP38 cone
BASS 2 x Spendor in-house 18cm Kevlar cones
SENSITIVITY 90dB/W/m
NOMINAL IMPEDANCE 8 ohms
MAX POWER HANDLING 250 Watts
BIWIRE No
FINISHES Black ash, cherry, oak wengé
DIMENSIONS (HWD) 103x21x35cm

