

Group Test

STEREO SPEAKERS £750-£899

Super speakers take a stand for stunning sound

In one of our closest *Group Tests* for quite some time, we pit six pairs of **standmounted stereo speakers** against each other. Whatever your taste in music and tone, there really is something for everyone in this great selection

Spendor S3/5R



£750

THE S3/5RS ARE a new version of Spendor's hugely successful S3/5 mini bookshelf speaker. They have undergone number of design tweaks, including a new 14cm mid-bass driver, complete with new cone material, a new 20mm soft-dome tweeter designed to promote a sweeter, cleaner sound and a re-engineered crossover.

Inside, the speaker's thin walls, are covered in rubberized damping panels

"They serve up a beautifully pure clean sound; there's a natural fluidity to music"

to absorb unwanted vibrations. And, unlike the old S3/5r, the new speaker is single-wired.

If the Dynaudio DM 2/10s are the giants of the bookshelf-speaker world, then the Spendors are Borrowers. These diminutive speakers are 31cm tall and are dwarfed by their Danish rivals. This gives the Spendors fantastic flexibility. They don't look out of place on a bookshelf, and you won't sacrifice bass integrity if you

↑ FOR

Produce a clean, wholesome sound; fast, articulate delivery; natural fluidity to the music

↓ AGAINST

Lack bass weight and a little power

→ VERDICT

An extremely likeable, pure-sounding speaker that could do with beefing up in the bass department

The S3/5Rs are available in five finishes, including cherry, light oak and black ash

site them on one. Spendor even makes a special version of the speaker fitted with a bracket for wall-mounting.

The downside is that, due to the physical limitations of the cabinet, the Spendors can't scale the same dynamic heights as the Dynaudios and ATCs. In every other area, the S3/5Rs excel.

Taut and well defined – just not big

It may not be the most powerful bass on show, but it is still taut and well-defined.

The Spendors serve up a beautifully pure and clean sound. There's a natural fluidity to the music that allows the acoustic guitar of Maximo Park's *Going Missing* to flow unhindered. Each strum is detailed, and stops and starts with fantastic precision; yet this doesn't destroy the overall rhythm of the track. The accompanying vocal shows the same purity and fluidity.

The Spendors' fast and articulate nature lends itself well to LSO's version of Tchaikovsky's

Trepak. The frivolous tune bounds along, the Spendors riding the orchestral wave, with controlled dynamic explosions along the way.

The S3/5Rs are lovable, talented speakers that can provide hour after hour of enjoyment. If they could just beef up that bass delivery, we'd have no hesitation in giving them five stars.

