

Supertest

NO. 348 £795 - £1000 STEREO SPEAKERS

SPENDOR S3e

www.spendoraudio.com
(01323) 843474



£795

★★★★★

These are the smallest and cheapest boxes in this test, yet they manage a superb performance that puts more expensive, less talented rivals to shame – a great buy!

Sound

★★★★★

These Spendors produce a great all-round sound. Solid bass punch, too

Build

★★★★★

Crisp lines with Spendor paying a good deal of attention to details

Compatibility

★★★★★

A neutral balance makes for easy matching. Simple to position, too



Small but perfectly formed, the S3es offer a near-faultless performance – if only that midrange had a bit more verve

Spendor S3e

£795

↑ FOR

Remarkable bass depth and punch for such little enclosures; sweet top end; top-class finish and build

↓ AGAINST

That midrange is just a touch sterile

◆◆◆ VERDICT

These are the cheapest and smallest loudspeakers on test, and they come up with a near-faultless performance



the rear panel, you'll find what looks like a letterbox. According to Spendor it is a two-dimensional, linear-flow, reflex design. Whatever the technicalities, this port design claims to improve lower-frequency delivery. And it works, extremely well.

Higher up the frequency range, the news remains good. Delivery is extremely clear throughout and excellent levels of information are laid bare. Top-end delivery is wonderful, challenging the AVIs for best in test. Even from cold, the S3e's 27mm tweeter sounds sweet and open, delivering cymbals with crispness and fullness.

Rhythmically, the S3es happily keep pace with even some tricky Youssou N'Dour, refusing to lose the plot during *Tijaniyya* from his *Egypt* set. However Youssou does expose a chink in the Spendor's child-size armour. They don't always quite get to grip with his or the backing vocals. Detail levels are good and it's easy to differentiate between singers, but the midrange lacks what could be described as 'the human touch'. More richness would add the final level of credibility to vocals and, indeed, help you 'warm' further to the Spendors. As it stands, they're emphatically good speakers, but those who value vocals over everything else should demo long and hard.

Otherwise, the Spendor S3es are without fault: the finish is neat and they look especially svelte perched on a pair of Partington Super Dreadnought stands. Sit them in free space for best results if you can, but placing them closer to a rear wall doesn't overly upset the apple cart.

IMAGINE A TODDLER whose first words are spoken with a fully broken, adult voice. Now imagine the speaker equivalent and you have a mental picture of the Spendor S3e.

It's only an ickle wee box, standing just over 34cm on tippy-toes and a waif-like 17cm wide. It doesn't even reach that far back (just 26cm), but boy does this child-size speaker punch above its weight. In what could be considered a brutal act, the Spendors pair's first test disc – after a decent warm-up, of course – was 50 Cent's latest bass-fest, *Massacre*.

Time to watch a pair of speakers descend into chaos – or so we thought. The Spendors love a bit of hip-hop, bashing out surprisingly deep and taut bass, and continuing to do so at pretty high volumes, too.

You ask: all this bass from a two-way standmount, with a 14cm mid/bass driver? Well yes and no: turn the Spendor round and, at the bottom of