



Spendor eschews convention, giving a large centre and smallish fronts, and it works well

Spendor package



£4445

MOST FULL-SIZE speaker packages that come our way combine large fronts with a small centre. We can understand why – a small centre is easier to house, and bigger fronts often confer better stereo sound.

Spendor breaks ranks, though. It believes the centre is the most important speaker, because it does almost all the dialogue and locks the action onto the screen.

If you doubt this train of thought, just disconnect the centre from your surround system and hear how much work it does. Just to ram home the point (and keep within the test price band), Spendor decided to partner its monster C9e centre with a pair of some of the smallest floorstanders on the market, the S5es.

The rest of the system includes a pair of SR5 wall-mounters, though if wall-mounting isn't possible, you'd do just as well by

FOR
Clarity, control and resolution; fine build and finish

AGAINST
Large centre might be hard to accommodate

VERDICT
This package goes against convention by including a massive centre speaker and compact fronts, but the results are deeply impressive

choosing the company's S3e standmounts, saving a couple of hundred pounds in the process.

A REL Storm 5 subwoofer completes the package. This REL is a product Spendor thinks works particularly well with its speakers – and we can't argue with that.

This is an excellent package that serves the twin demanding masters of music and movies

“It's an excellent set-up that serves movies and music exceptionally well”

exceptionally well. The use of a such a big centre speaker pays off, lottery-jackpot style. No rival in this test makes the dialogue in the *Mr & Mrs Smith's* final shootout scene so clear and easy to follow.

Those who have seen this film know it's not about subtlety or finesse (or plot for that matter), but it's great fun, particularly when listening through a package as capable as this. There's plenty of

firepower, too – the C9e sounding incredibly authoritative when the soundtrack demands.

And don't let all this praise for the centre overshadow the rest of the package: each part does its job well. The petite S5es belie their size to produce a sound of scale and power, while with stereo music – in this case Kate Bush's *Aerial* – they're as accomplished as you'd expect from a stereo speaker Award-winner.

A superb all-round system

The wall-mount SR5s look a little odd, but once sited on a solid wall, they're as talented as just about any conventional alternative of similar price. As surround speakers, they trade the impressive dispersion characteristics of the bipole/dipoles examples in this test for a greater clarity and resolution.

And the sub? The Storm 5 does an excellent low-end job, offering ample bass – just what you need!

If you value control, composure and detail, this excellent multi-channel package could be for you.



SYSTEM
FRONTS S5e
CENTRE C9e
REARS SR5
SUBWOOFER
REL Storm 5

SPECS
MAX POWER
125 watts
LOWEST
SENSITIVITY
87dB/w/m
NOMINAL
IMPEDANCE 8
ohms
FRONT (HWD)
79 x 17 x 26cm
CENTRE (HWD)
23 x 60 x 36cm
REAR (HWD)
31 x 31 x 18cm
SUBWOOFER
(HWD)
52 x 35 x 37cm
BIWIRE Yes
FINISHES
Black ash, cherry,
maple, rosenut