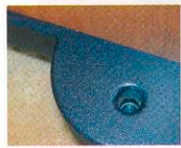


Sometimes you can hear that pin drop.



Some 30 years ago Spendor produced its BCI model; one of the seminal loudspeakers of its age, renown for its accurate and neutral reproduction of music. Over the years the company has maintained its high standards and continued to invest in research and development. Now under the leadership of Philip Swift; one of the founders of Audiolab, the company has created a new generation of models which claim to offer still higher performance as well as elegant modern styling. This month we test a model from the middle of the range; the Spendor S6e.

The Spendor S6e is a rare loudspeaker in that it manages to look slim and elegant without looking as though it is about to topple over. Its stability is all down to a clever "outrigger" plinth which is integral to the cabinet's structure and home to four steel spikes. The whole assembly is both attractive and functional and shows an attention to detail which we subsequently found permeated the whole design of this loudspeaker. The cabinets are strongly built from veneered MDF panels, with plenty of internal bracing, and incorporate one of the



cleverest ports I have seen for many years. Instead of a plastic tube there is a slot between the cabinet "base" and the plinth. This so-called "3D linear flow port" ensures a low pressure loading and so a freedom from the extraneous port noises and the asymmetrical loading problems which afflict so many designs.

The drive units have a number of innovations coupled with good solid engineering practice. To describe them fully would take up most of the space allowed for this review but I will mention that the bass/mid-range drive-unit has specially profiled magnet pole-pieces which are expensive to fabricate but which reduce the distortion and so produce a much cleaner transparent sound. The tweeter has its own virtues including rear venting of the dome into a damped chamber. This technique lowers the fundamental resonance of the tweeter; and in real terms that means it can be used without any danger of stimulating a nasty peak in the response. So again something that aids a clean open sound. These two units are connected together by a crossover network of some complexity. Not only is the design outstanding; putting performance way above cost; but the components used are of a quality that is rarely seen inside loudspeakers these days. The inductors are wound using oxygen-free copper wire on high-purity compressed iron powder cores. The result is a linear magnetic circuit that will not suffer from saturation, and hence distortion, even at high power levels. The capacitors are large polypropylene types which have a low



dielectric "memory" and so free of the "smearing effect" that some capacitors cause.

Everything about the design of the Spendor S6e's seem to be geared to reproducing the music signal with perfect linearity or put another way; with the lowest possible amount of distortion & colouration. Removing these gets rid of the "mud & grit" and should enable us to hear more of the music. Would that work out in practice?

These speakers proved quite difficult to access and we found that a little effort is needed to get the best out of them; but it is effort that is repaid in bucket loads. Cold, straight out of the box, they are almost unlistenable; at least for a loudspeaker at this price level. But after a couple of days spent running-in they calmed down and thereafter improved on a daily basis over the following



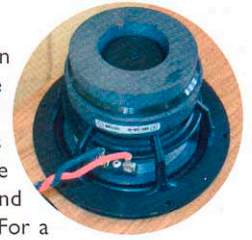
week. They need to have the spikes fitted and they need to be fitted tightly because there is some real bass produced by these Spendor's and often you feel it rather than hear it. Room positioning also justifies some experimentation and putting the backs of the speakers closer to the wall warms and softens the sound somewhat. We actually finished up with the speakers about one foot from the wall.

Make no mistake about it these speakers are revealing; indeed rather too revealing on occasion. The soundstage has real depth and the layers of music unwrap in an interesting way. Listening to a Harry Connick Junior track which is an acoustic recording; I was transported back to that recording session. It was now so obvious that the track had been recorded in a large studio when previously I thought it had a small club ambience. Choral music really came into its own with each group of voices being separated and the counterpoints and harmonies could be enjoyed as the composer intended.

But with rock music you have to be careful. Those tweeters ruthlessly expose distortion and if it is a bad recording you'll

hear it and be forced to reach for the remote control. But again you can get so much from the music. Listening to an old recording of Howlin' Wolf's "Little Red Rooster" every nuance of the acoustic slide guitar could be heard whilst Wolf's ragged yet powerful voice

held your attention. Jon Cleary's "Help me Somebody" revealed that these Spendor's really can produce some tight, controlled and surprisingly deep bass. For a moment you think they are a bit bass light and the next moment the floorboards are moving. It all depends not on the speaker but on the recording.



Overall the voices are slightly forward of the speakers suggesting a touch of presence so the right choice of electronics is needed. For my tastes the use of the Naim Audio CD51 and Nait amplifier gave a sound that was slightly too aggressive in nature but with Quad and Marantz amplifiers the balance was very natural. At the beginning of the week listening to the Grateful Dead playing "Cumberland Blues" was not an enjoyable experience. A week later we tried again and you were listening to a great band from rock's greatest era. Very much a case of patience being its own reward.

The Spendor S6 is such a revealing loudspeaker that you find yourself listening with the same focus as if you were at a live concert. A bit like driving a Lamborghini Diablo; you have to concentrate on the driving and then the rewards are high. Everything about this loudspeaker shows its audiophile heritage and justifies the investment. This is a loudspeaker you will need to audition and we recommend you do so at the first opportunity.

FACT FILE

- Description: 2 way floor standing loudspeaker
- Enclosure type: Spendor 3D linear flow reflex
- Drive units HF: 27mm coated fabric dome, damped vented enclosure
- Drive units LF/MF: 180mm ep38 polymer cone
- Frequency resp: 48Hz-20kHz ± 3dB on reference axis
- Frequency range: -6dB at 36Hz
- Sensitivity: 88dB for 1w at 1 metre
- Impedance: 8 ohms (nominal) 6.2 ohms (minimum)
- Crossover: Crossover frequency is 4.0 kHz
- Power handling: 15 to 250 watts into 8 ohms un-clipped
- Distortion: <1% 100Hz - 20kHz 90 dB @ 1m (Harmonic)
- Magnetic shielding: All drive units are shielded
- Dimensions: 875 x 192 x 300mm (34.4 x 7.6 x 11.8inch) (H x W x D)
- Plinth maximum: 281 x 320mm (11.1 x 12.6inch) (W x D)
- Cabinet finishes: Real wood veneers; Cherry, Maple, Rosenut, Black Ash
- Price: £1495.00 per pair

