

loudspeakers

SPENDOR S6E £1,495pr

If this loudspeaker was an automobile, it would be a Rover P5B – the bolide of choice for Prime ministers from Harold Wilson to Margaret Thatcher. It is terribly English – and all the better for it. It's technically interesting, conservatively yet stylishly presented and does the job unerringly and without protest. It works very well, with no small degree of panache. Loudspeakers are intensely subjective things, and not everyone will love the Spendor S6e, yet it's so damn good at so much that it's extremely hard to fault. Oh-so-many designs sound impressive in the showroom and yet when you get them

complement comprises a 180mm bass-mid drive unit and 27mm tweeter. These are the least 'showy' sounding loudspeakers we've heard that have been designed in the last two decades. Listened to cold, and with little attention paid to matching, placement or set-up, they're simply a tad over warm and lacklustre. Fettle them and the picture changes profoundly, with an extremely even-handed and open window on the music with none of the dry, acerbic, forward, distortion-fuelled zing of so many other rivals. Nor do they serve up bass boom that apparently adds weight but in truth kills speed – despite their innate warm-

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home it's downhill all the way – yet the reverse is true here. This floorstander seems a tad warm and woolly, yet when you position it carefully, match it sensibly and relax with your favourite disc, things change dramatically. It comes 'out of itself' and starts to sing like nothing else we've heard at or near its £1,495 retail price this year. It's conscientiously and thoroughly engineered (with lots of impressive detail touches), gracefully styled (by Allen Boothroyd - the man behind Meridian's arresting visual language) and sober yet immensely capable sounding. The cabinets don't attempt any fancy curvatures - rather, they're robustly put together, beautifully veneered and conventionally shaped affairs, housing a tweeter and mid/bass unit, and a clever downward firing port. The drive unit

side-of-neutral tonality, they never sound slow or ponderous. What they offer is a unique combination of speed, grip and transparency allied to most 'benevolent' tonality. To this day, we still get readers writing in extolling the virtues of Spendor's classic 1970s BC1s – their unremittingly 'liberal' sound winning many friends. Well, the S6es take these traditional values and put them into that legendary 'modern context' – they're not fat or loose like their progenitors, but have all their abiding charm. A civilised and sophisticated loudspeaker for people of a similar disposition.



RUNNER UP

ELAC FS207.2 £999.99

Most sub-£1,000 boxes offer you differing degrees of dryness, from 'southern Italy' to 'Sahara Desert'. The Elacs are different; they're lush, warm, musical and – their eternal credit – boast a sweet, airy and atmospheric treble. The reason for this is the company's home-made JET ribbon tweeter which is an absolute gem – it gives you a taste of the high end. These floorstanders take you places that other price rivals simply can't go, thanks to their superb drivers – think Honda VTECs to the wheezy diesel engines of their rivals... Wunderbar!