

Spendor A3



The Spendor A3s pull you right to the heart of the music. So smooth yet super-detailed, these baby floorstanders are wonderfully natural and beguiling to listen to. They're so effortless and natural sounding that everything you play is a pleasure.

Soberly styled and the smallest floorstanders here, these are hardly an audacious fashion statement

DETAILS

PRODUCT
Spendor A3

ORIGIN
UK

TYPE
Floorstanding loudspeaker

WEIGHT
12.4kg

DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
165 x 750 x 250mm

FEATURES

- Two-way, reflex ported loudspeaker
- 22mm tweeter, 2x 150mm mid/bass units
- Claimed sensitivity: 86dB/1W/1m

DISTRIBUTOR
Spendor Audio Systems

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WEBSITE
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Another speaker brand whose name stretches back in the mists of time (well, the seventies), Spendor has built a name for itself doing civilised, delicate, subtle speakers that stand apart from the mass-market boom and tizz sound. Its early connection with the BBC and its ensuing popularity with audio professionals has only bolstered its reputation. The A3 you see here is the company's smallest, cheapest floorstander and is far less physically imposing than the rest of the group. It's a two-way design, with a 22mm dome tweeter paired to a small 150mm Spendor driver sporting the company's EP38 (Engineering Polymer) cone material. Crossover point is quite high at 4.2kHz, and the speaker eschews biwiring, unlike some others here.

The quality of the cabinetry is excellent, but not as flashy as some; if you're a fan of discreet-looking

loudspeakers rather than imposing style statements, these will fit in well. There's a choice of black ash, cherry, light oak and dark walnut finishes. There's a single rear-mounted bass reflex port, but because the speaker is relatively small it doesn't demand to be moved well out into the room. The downside of its size is the poor quoted sensitivity of 86dB; this speaker needs a sturdy transistor amplifier of at least 50W to get decent sound levels, I'd say. Also the power handling, is lower than some others here.

Sound quality

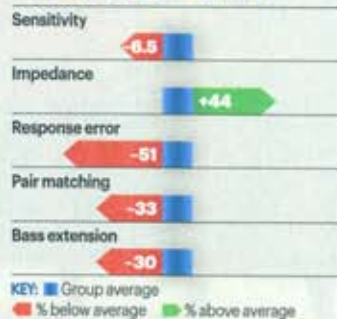
From the first few bars of the New Order track, I find myself surprised by just how good these Spendor's are. The amazing trick is that they're extremely detailed and highly sophisticated to listen to, yet don't come over as analytical or dispassionate in any way. Rather, they manage to string together the rhythms of the song better than any other speaker here, and at the same time give a great insight into all the technical aspects of the recording, such as the sonorous, ringing keyboards and Bernard Sumner's plaintive vocals. Moreover, they are surprisingly good at dynamics; even when listening at fairly low levels they sound highly expressive.

Despite that relatively poor bass extension, what bass they do have is absolutely superb; it is just strong enough to announce its presence, yet proves wonderfully supple and propulsive. It seems to integrate really well with the rest of the music, and gets the feet tapping without ever breaking into a sweat. The High Llamas track shows that the A3 has what people used to call "a good tone"; the speakers give a great insight into the recording without drawing attention to themselves. Vocals in particular are a joy; the A3s shine lots of light on Sean O'Hagan's voice, and capture all the angst and emotion, yet never grate. Behind this, those harmonies soar and the instrumentation plays along in a wonderfully satisfying way.

ON TEST

Given its small cabinet it is no surprise that the A3 has the lowest sensitivity here. Spendor claims 86dB, but our pink noise figure of 82.3dB suggests even that is about 4dB optimistic. Payback comes in the form of what is the least challenging amplifier load in the group, with a minimum modulus of 6.2 ohms at 222Hz – just as claimed and justifying the 8 ohms nominal figure – and a minimum EPDR of 2.3 ohms at 121Hz, comfortably the highest of the group. On-axis frequency response errors were remarkably well controlled at ± 1.9 dB and ± 2.2 dB respectively, and pair matching was good at ± 0.9 dB. As further compensation for the low sensitivity, bass extension was also best in group at 40Hz, although the roll-off is very fast. The CSD waterfall shows fast initial energy decay across the spectrum, but some quite high Q resonances at treble frequencies. **KH**

RESULTS AT A GLANCE



Despite being refined and sophisticated to a degree beyond all others in this group test, these loudspeakers show themselves to have superb transient speed; you can hear it from the first bar of Lou Donaldson's *Alligator Bogaloo*; the tweeter helps a lot here – the A3's high frequency unit is a class act. It has lots of air and space without being bright and shows great finesse. It also integrates very well with the rest of the music, to give an all-of-a-piece feel to the proceedings. Indeed, short of the superb Tannoy, the A3 proves one of the best in terms of stereo imaging here. A small speaker, but a big surprise! ●

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY
★★★★★

VALUE FOR MONEY
★★★★★

BUILD QUALITY
★★★★★

EASE OF DRIVE
★★★★★

LIKE: Thoroughly musical sound; delicacy, finesse, speed

DISLIKE: Styling only its mother could love; so-so sensitivity

WE SAY: The surprise of the group; sounds better than it looks!

OVERALL

