

Maximise your space

£495 - £875

COMPACT STEREO SPEAKERS | Group Test



Spendor S3e

£795

↑ FOR

Insightful and even-handed sound; lovely quality of build

↓ AGAINST

Lack a little warmth in the midrange, but not really anything else

◆ VERDICT

The S3es are terrifically capable though understated performers – push the AVIs very close



AFTER THE SENSUAL curves and leather of the Sonus Fabers these Spendor S3es look almost embarrassingly uptight. Their ultra-clean looks and lack of visual glitter are something of a shock to the senses.

Live with them a while and these simple Spendors just fade into the background, visually speaking. The same applies to their sound. Though that appears to be a criticism, it isn't meant to be – in fact, as far as the sound goes, there are few higher complements we can give. If speakers draw attention to themselves that means they're stamping too much of a signature over the recording, which is definitely not a good thing. Sure, all speakers have a certain amount of character, but some – such

as these Spendors – are beautifully benign in their nature.

If you're familiar with the old S3s, this new version will be something of a shock. The S3e is cleaner, clearer and far more analytical than its predecessor. Dynamics have more bite and the bass is notably more forceful, with much improved depth.

The result is a speaker that can kick hard with the likes of Lemon Jelly, and deliver the latest *Harry Potter* soundtrack with all of the scale, subtlety and insight it deserves. True, there's a coolness, a touch of sterility in the midrange that means they don't quite manage to inspire in the same way as the old model did, or the ProAcs do in this *Group Test*. However, neither of these can match the S3es resolution, or overall authority, so they remain a top-class choice.

These standmounts are easy to drive, so system-matching comes down to quality, not muscle. The old model was happy with the Cyrus 6 amplifier, or maybe an 8, but this new one needs something with a bit more richness. Roksan's Kandy Mk III is a bare minimum, with a better match being the same company's M-series Caspian, or even AVI's Integrated amplifier. Positioning them is easy: use solid stands, at least 20cm from a back wall, with a touch of toe-in.

These Spendors are very hard to fault. They might appeal to the head more than the heart, but they remain one of the highlights of this group.