

Spendors deserve long-term relationship

Spendor S5e

£1095

Floorstanding speakers

↑ FOR

Even-handed presentation; clarity and bass control; sturdy build

↓ AGAINST

Low-key presentation might not impress on a short listen

◆ VERDICT

These compact floorstanders don't score an instant hit, but in time their all-round excellence shines through



RECORDINGS DON'T GET much more demanding than Chemical Brothers' *Setting Sun*, an explosive dance track with an atomic bassline and the kind of treble that, in the wrong set-up, breaks glass at 50 paces. So how did the new Spendors handle

it? They refused to buckle, delivering a refined yet dramatic sound of a quality beyond what's expected at this price. There was no sign of hardening or compression, even at high volumes.

However, give the S5es a short listen and their talents aren't immediate, mostly due to an unexaggerated tonal balance that doesn't emphasise the extremes in a bid to excite. Their presentation isn't as bold as that of some rivals, either – but the payback is their appeal will last over the years.

These two-and-a-half-way designs use two 14cm drivers. The mid/bass is the same unit from the impressive SR5 wallmounters and C9e centre, while the bass driver is a new homopolymer-coned affair. At 79cm high, the S5es are no giants, so don't expect the weighty bass that larger rivals such as B&W's 704s generate. Even so, low frequencies are taut and tuneful. Timing and dynamics impress, too. You also get an insightful midrange that has plenty of bite without sacrificing refinement. The result is a fine

delivery of vocal material such as Radiohead's classic *Fake Plastic Trees*.

Positioning is easy: the rear-firing linear-flow port ensures bass stays controlled even when the speakers are close to a rear wall. The best compromise between bass weight and stereo imaging is with them 30cm from the wall, slightly toed-in to the listener.

The S5es are smallish, cost a chunk and don't stand out much on a shop floor – give them a long listen, though, and their class really shows.

The solid finish is available in cherry, maple, rosenut and black ash veneers



ALSO CONSIDER

B&W 704

£1400 ★★★★★ February 2004

Stylish towers that deliver plenty of attack and weightier bass

Mission 782se

£900 ★★★★★ June 2003

Compact floorstanders that are very highly rated in all areas