

**Spendor A5****£1500 ★★★★★**

**Five stars in January 2009, same again in February 2009 and then... nothing.** We've had the Spendor A5s out in our listening rooms often since then, of course, but this is their first formal review in over two years.

For a speaker that stands just 79cm high, the A5s are pretty heavy - it's almost as if they're made from concentrated essence of loudspeaker. The looks are purposeful (22mm dome tweeter above a 150mm mid/bass driver and a 150mm bass drive unit), the wood veneer is tactile, the finish flawless. Even the speaker binding posts seem classy.

At their best when out in the room and firing more-or-less dead ahead, the A5s are a multi-talented listen. Playing Villagers' *Becoming a Jackal*, the Spendors summon unlikely low-end punch, extension and control, and deliver great texture too - for all their seductive size, the A5s' fulsome bass presence means they're not a default choice for smaller rooms.

Elsewhere, the midrange is alive with immediacy and detail - vocalists seldom sound more engaged - and the top of the frequency range is attacked boldly. There's ample speed and drive, though the Spendors are just as capable of describing barely-there nuances as the broad strokes of a recording. In any event, their timing is sweetly precise, loading the leading edge of notes with information and offering a natural and unforced tonality. The soundstage they generate is sizeable, and their stereo focus unquestionable.

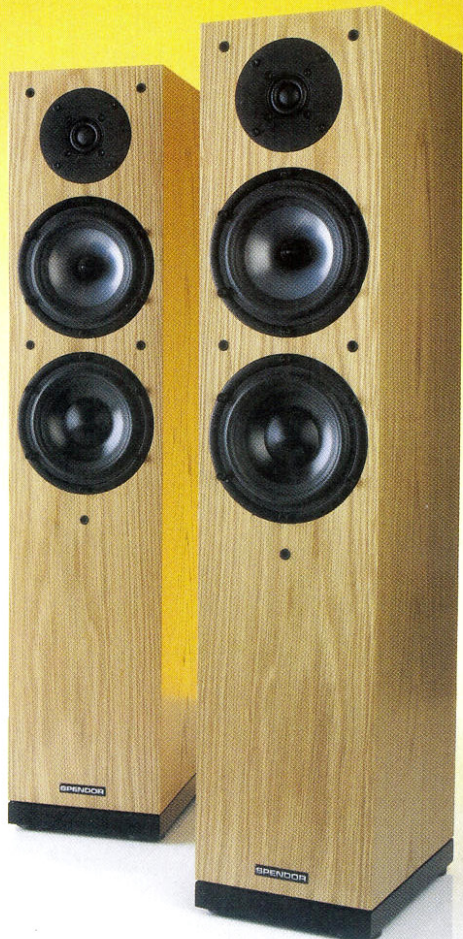
A sensitivity rating of 85 dB/W/m means they need to be shown the stick by an amplifier with adequate reserves if you're to get properly antisocial volume out of them. Otherwise the news is all good. Good enough to see off these rivals, certainly.

**Rating ★★★★★**

**FOR** Startling scale and punch; detailed and subtle too

**AGAINST** Relatively low sensitivity; won't suit the smallest listening rooms

**VERDICT** Endlessly listenable, these are accomplished beyond their price



**TEST VERDICT****THE WINNER****Spendor A5**  
£1500 ★★★★★

The superb **Spendors** take the laurels in this test. They are terrific all-rounders that revel in any type of music. Their rivals here all have their strengths, though, so don't write them off without some thought - and auditioning



**A**t first glance, your choice here seems straightforward. There's only one five-star recipient, after all, so that must mean 'job done', no?

Well, no - not really. As we never tire of saying, there's a little more to selecting the right product for you than reading the star ratings and leaving it at that.

Having said that, the KEF Q700s' three-star result does put them behind the rest of the pack. It's possible to cut the KEFs a little slack, though: they're the least expensive speakers in the test, after all, and they make a purposeful visual statement, as well as having that enjoyable midrange. But their low-frequency shortcomings do cost them amongst the rivals you see here.

The two four-star recipients, though very different in their approaches, are much more worthy of consideration. Kudos's X2s are wood-wrapped little

powerhouses, punching manfully and manoeuvring through even the most testing rhythms and tempos sinuously. You'll need to give them a long, hard listen to make sure their rather grainy, slightly dislocated treble reproduction isn't going to put your teeth on edge; but

**As happy in the concert hall as on the dance floor, the A5s can turn their hand to anything - as long as your amp has the *cojones*...**

if you can get beyond that you're left with a speaker that sounds altogether bigger and bolder than it looks.

And if you're carrying this 'discreet floorstander' concept to its logical conclusion, you'll finish up with Totem's willowy Arros - by no means a bad thing.

**SYSTEM BUILDER**

The Roksan Kandy will provide the necessary oomph to drive the A5s - and the other components make for a superb combination



**Roksan Kandy K2 amplifier**  
£900 ★★★★★



**Audiolab 8200CD CD player**  
£700 ★★★★★



**QED Revelation speaker cable**  
£15/m ★★★★★

Here's a stick-thin speaker able to generate a spacious, well-defined soundstage and deliver music with enthusiasm. Only those who place heavy emphasis on low frequencies should dismiss them out-of-hand.

If it's an all-rounder you crave, though, Spendor's A5s still rule the 'sawn-off floorstander' roost. Though short, they're fairly deep - and the amount of low-end stuff they generate makes them less-than ideal in small rooms - but in every other respect they're admirable. As happy in the concert-hall as on the dance-floor, the A5s can turn their hand to pretty much anything. As long as your amplifier has the *cojones* to bring them to life, the Spendors could be all the speaker you'll ever need.

For a full list of specifications and other useful info visit [whathifi.com](http://whathifi.com)

**Facts & figures**

**KEF Q700**  
£1000 ★★★★★

Type Floorstander • Sensitivity (dB/w/m) 89 • Impedance (ohms) 8 • Max power handling 150W • Biwirable Yes • Finishes 3 • Dimensions (hwd) 92 x 21 x 30cm



**Kudos X2**  
£1350 ★★★★★

Type Floorstander • Sensitivity (dB/w/m) 86 • Impedance (ohms) 8 • Max power handling 150W • Biwirable No • Finishes 6 • Dimensions (hwd) 78 x 17 x 21cm



**Spendor A5**  
£1500 ★★★★★

Type Floorstander • Sensitivity (dB/w/m) 85 • Impedance (ohms) 8 • Max power handling 150W • Biwirable No • Finishes 4 • Dimensions (hwd) 79 x 17 x 25cm



**Totem Arro**  
£1200 ★★★★★

Type Floorstander • Sensitivity (dB/w/m) 86 • Impedance (ohms) 4 • Max power handling 80W • Biwirable No • Finishes 2 • Dimensions (hwd) 85 x 13 x 18cm