



Spendor Classic 2/3 | Stereo speakers | €2.125 pcs

Classic flavour, modern bite

FOR Scale and authority; build; insight; lovely presentation

AGAINST Partnering stands are expensive at app. €378 (pcs)



Few speakers can match the heritage of Spendor's Classic 2/3s. This design can trace a direct line back to the highly regarded SA2s, launched in 1980.

But the engineering ethos behind the product goes back even further, to ideas developed by the BBC engineering department in the 1960s. Does that put these speakers at a disadvantage compared with high-tech alternatives from the likes of Dynaudio or Bowers & Wilkins? As long as the distinctive styling and relatively large size aren't an issue, we don't think so.

Sizing it all up

These Spendor's are 54cm tall, about a third bigger than most of their standmount competition, but they also need to be positioned well clear of walls to sound balanced, and are likely to be most at home in medium-sized to large rooms. While the dedicated, open-framed wooden stands - the Fortis made by Hi-fi Racks - cost a hefty €378, we can't find a preferable alternative in terms of performance and aesthetics.

The BBC-inspired engineering is most obvious in the speaker's cabinet construction. Most rivals aim to make the enclosure as rigid as possible to give the drive units a solid foundation to work from and minimise any cabinet wall movement. Spendor's Classic models take a different approach.

The BBC way is to make the cabinet walls thin, so they flex at low frequencies where our hearing is less discriminating, and to control the resonance by carefully, but heavily, damping the cabinet panels. Spendor's Classic models have always used this method, and the 2/3s are no different, though this latest model features a far more rigid front baffle.

In these speakers, the company has further refined the technique by using new visco-elastic damping pads in strategic places. The pads absorb the

vibration energy and turn it into heat, but the speakers don't get noticeably hot during heavy use.

The Classic 2/3s' mid/bass driver is all-new. It's an in-house unit, which is something of a rarity for a manufacturer of Spendor's size. It has a 21cm diameter polyamide-fibre-reinforced polymer cone and a magnesium alloy chassis, chosen for its rigidity.

The 22mm-wide surround dome tweeter has been around for a few years but remains a fine performer. Its unusual profile is designed to deliver extended highs while maintaining wide dispersion

KEY FEATURES



22mm-wide surround dome



Thin-walled cabinet



21cm mid/bass driver

characteristics. The tweeter and mid/bass driver are mated with a high-quality crossover network.

Sensitivity is quoted at 88dB/W/m while impedance is 8 ohms (minimum 6.8 ohms). These figures suggest that the Classic 2/3s are easy speakers to drive for most quality amplifiers.

Partnering kit

These remain premium-priced speakers and so demand good-quality source components and amplification to give of their best. We use our reference Naim NDS/555PS music streamer, Clearaudio Innovation Wood turntable and Gamut D3i/D200i pre/power combination, with great results. Rega's Elex-R is pressed into use too, without issue. The Spendor's simply reflect the quality of the signal they receive.

The cabinets look like they've been made with care, and the real-wood veneer is neatly applied. This latest generation of Spendor's Classic speakers have grilles that are held on with magnets. This not only makes it far easier to take them off, but the speakers now also look neater without them. There are two finish options for the enclosures - the dark walnut of our review samples and cherry.

Smooth operators

The Classics have an easy-going sonic nature, one that draws the listener into the music rather than shouting for attention. They may not win out in a quick dealer comparison but, given time, their considerable charms are obvious. Most modern rivals sound smaller, leaner and more aggressive.

Tonally, the presentation is pretty even. There's certainly less warmth to the midrange and bass than in previous generations, but there remains a lack of overt aggression. This characteristic doesn't go as far as taking the venom out of tracks such as Nirvana's *Come As You*

IN DETAIL...



Twin speaker-connection posts allow for bi-wiring



The Fortis stands aren't cheap but they suit the Classics visually and sonically



All the qualities of their predecessors and more besides

"The 2/3s surprise us a lot. We can't think of a better all-round alternative at this price"

Are - where the 2/3s show a surprising amount of attitude - but it still makes poor recordings and below-par electronics a little more palatable.

As we listen to a range of classical music, from the gorgeous *Clair De Lune* by Debussy to Stravinsky's often frantic *The Rite Of Spring*, we're aware of the Spendor's impressive sonic authority and ability to deliver dynamics - subtle and large-scale - with remarkable grace.

There's a beautiful sense of fluidity to the way these standmounters go from quiet to loud and it's coupled with a delicate sense of ease that most price rivals struggle to approach. Those large mid/bass drivers manage to shift plenty of air without sounding as if they're working hard at all. Push harder and the Classic 2/3s retain their composure.

Of course, there's lots of bass - how could there not be with such a generous cabinet volume and such big mid/bass units? But it's delivered with finesse as

well as weight and power. Compared with previous generations of this model, there's far more in the way of precision - the Classics revealing the texture of low-frequency notes with great skill.

A new quality

There's plenty of punch too, as we find out with Major Lazer's *Pon De Floor*. Hard-hitting music such as this reveals a level of rhythmic momentum that challenges the likes of Dynaudio's award-winning Special Fortys - and that's a departure for the Classics.

It's not all change, though. The 2/3s remain true to their heritage in delivering a seamless, inviting midrange. Voices come through with body, weight and just the right degree of natural warmth. There's plenty of detail too, with the standmounts picking up subtle nuances and instrumental textures without highlighting the fact.

The 2/3s surprise us quite a lot. They retain the charm and easy-going nature of their highly regarded predecessors, but now have the punch and rhythmic precision to work well with a wider range of music. We can't think of a better all-round alternative at this price level.

WHAT HI-FI? says

Rating ★★★★★

SOUND	★★★★★
COMPATIBILITY	★★★★★
BUILD	★★★★★

VERDICT The Classic 2/3s may look retro, but they sound as good as anything we've heard at this price