

**Choice**  
exotica

SPENDOR D7  
LOUDSPEAKER £3,995





# Seventh Heaven



There's more to Spendor's soberly styled D7 speaker than meets the eye. **David Price** guides you through its many talents...

**T**he 'S' series was for a long time Spendor's modern mainstay. These were nice, gently musical, smooth boxes, that sounded rather unlike the KEFs and Focals of this world. You wouldn't find the fine detail etched on your cranium, nor was the midrange intense enough to make your nostrils flare.

In my view, the challenge for the new D-series is to retain much of the flagship's precision and insight, but put it together in a more exciting package. I think the company has succeeded. There's something about the way the D7 goes about its business that makes the music magic. But here's the clincher – it does so in an unerringly Spendor way. By this I mean it doesn't do its stuff by wild colourations or showy voicing, it works in a subtle, nuanced and transparent way.

I sense that Spendor has strived to get every aspect of this loudspeaker right. There are no ribbon tweeters, 'high-tech' cone materials and wacky cabinet profiles here. Rather, the D7 is about subtle, intelligent finessing of conventional loudspeaker design.

Superficially its cabinetry is conventional, although Spendor uses its 'dynamic damping' method to control natural cabinet resonances, with special polymers to convert vibration into heat at key points inside the box. The drive units are effectively decoupled from the cabinet, which is asymmetrically braced to eliminate internal acoustic standing waves, the company says. The latest Spendor linear flow port system incorporates a twin Venturi (aerodynamically profiled) baffle to promote airflow speed from the cabinet base. These also integrate the floor spike mounting into the structure of the enclosure for extra rigidity, and a machined steel stabiliser plate is fitted and provided a very secure mounting on my thickly carpeted concrete floor.

Like many mid-sized floorstanders, the D7 is a 2.5-way design, sporting a bespoke Spendor mid/bass driver built on a pressure diecast magnesium alloy chassis. The cone uses a new formulation of Spendor's 'engineering polymer' called EP77, which is said to have a high degree of natural internal damping combined with high rigidity. This is further complemented by a lower bass driver using a Kevlar cone, with an unsaturated copolymer compound used for the surround.

The 'Linear Pressure Zone' tweeter dome is built onto a stainless steel front plate that houses a damped acoustic chamber immediately before the dome itself. This combines with a 'suspended' phase correcting screen immediately in front of the centre of

## ► DETAILS

**PRODUCT:**  
Spendor D7  
**ORIGIN:** UK  
**TYPE:** Floorstanding  
loudspeaker  
**WEIGHT:**  
21kg  
**DIMENSIONS:**  
(WxHxD)  
950x192x320mm  
**FEATURES:**  
• Spendor linear  
flow, twin  
Venturi port  
• 22mm linear phase  
hybrid soft dome  
• 18cm EP77  
polymer coned  
mid/bass driver  
• 18cm rigid  
Kevlar composite  
coned woofer  
**DISTRIBUTOR:**  
Spendor Audio  
Systems  
**TELEPHONE:**  
01323 843474  
**WEBSITE:**  
spendoraudio.com

the dome to equalise signal path length across its surface and create a symmetrical pressure environment. This way, the dome can operate in a completely balanced linear mode, so all parts of it are behaving in a very similar manner thanks to the 'air damping' system. A precision woven polyamide membrane is used.

## Sound quality

In my listening room I find that infinite baffle speakers sound happiest. So I was mightily surprised with the new Spendor D7, which seemed totally at home just centimetres from a rear wall. There wasn't so much as a hint of low frequency sloppiness, the bass staying taut, supple and decently

**In the D7 Spendor has surpassed itself, offering all that's good in sonic terms**

extended. This was the most endearing thing about this speaker – its ability to work well in real world conditions, without any fuss.

The second thing that impressed was its sensitivity, which seems higher than a caffeine addict giving up smoking – the D7s don't quite attain Tannoy Westminster loudness levels per single watt of power, but are obviously louder than most. This makes them great for lowish powered Class A transistor and tube amplifiers alike. Spendor's claim of 90dB/1w/1m doesn't seem optimistic, and it's a nice boast to be able to make. The speaker shouldn't tax most amplifiers – only those that worship at the church of the single-ended triode will want more.

Sensitive speakers generally have a light, easy, fast air about them, and this one is no exception. Cue up the Flaming Lips' *Symphony 3000-21*, and the D7 sounds faster than any other Spendor I've ever heard, racing along capturing all the music's transients and microdynamics. Yet it doesn't seem in the least bit harsh, forward or edgy. Many 'fast' speakers achieve the sensation of speed through a little extra 'zing' across the upper mid and treble, but not so here. Instead, the D7 gave a smooth, fluid, supple sound – devoid of any signs of drive units fighting with one another, or breaking up and distorting. It was a lovely, cohesive, all-of-a-piece sort of performance.

While it retains that smooth Spendor signature sound, the D7 is





## Q&A

**Philip Swift**

MD, Spondor Audio Systems



**DP: What was it that prompted the choice of a 2.5-way design?**

**PS:** A 2.5-way system offers increased power handling and the opportunity to share the low frequency load between two drivers. When two complementary drivers operate in the same acoustic enclosure the sound you hear takes on wonderful coherence because both drivers move in total harmony.

**Why did you opt for the EP77 cone material instead of – say – Kevlar?**

Our new EP77 polymer has the perfect balance of mechanical and acoustic parameters. It has vanishingly low breakup and resonant modes and it creates a stable stiff cone piston for excellent low-frequency performance.

**Why did you choose Kevlar for the bass driver cone?**

Our implementation creates an incredibly rigid cone for ultimate bass precision, and it does not generate out-of-band 'noise' which introduces subtle midband colouration.

**What prompted you to develop that pressure plate for the tweeter?**

Our front plate incorporates a phase correcting micro foil to equalise soundwave path lengths across the diaphragm surface, simultaneously it creates a symmetrical pressure environment so the tweeter operates in a balanced linear mode. We choose a hybrid wide-surround dome over a ribbon because ribbons suffer from unacceptably poor vertical dispersion. And when you combine a ribbon with a moving coil driver there is always an audible and disconcerting discontinuity as sound crosses between the drivers.

**Is this the best all-round speaker Spondor has ever made?**

Yes. It is rivalled only by our Classic SP100R2, which substitutes absolute resolution, transparency, agility and modern style with a rich and charming personality and an original 1970's look. Many audiophiles rate the SP100R2 as one of the finest loudspeakers of all time.

## HOW IT COMPARES

THE CLOSEST RIVAL for Spondor's new D7 is surely Monitor Audio's GX300, at £3,000. This is a mightily impressive 3-way box, with a sublime finish that worries even the beautifully turned out D7.

In terms of styling the Monitor Audio is also extremely impressive, not that the D7 looks like something only its mother could love!

Build quality is excellent, making life very hard for the D7, especially as it costs £500 more.

Sonically, here the two pull apart a bit more. Although both designs set out to be versatile, medium sized premium floorstanders that are purposed to cover all the bases well, the Spondor is a little smoother, sweeter and warmer sounding. By contrast, the Monitor Audio is just that bit more transparent, drier and more incisive. Thanks to its superb ribbon tweeter and ceramic aluminium/magnesium coned drivers, the GX300 shines a bright, white halogen light on the recording, whereas the D7 is fractionally gentler and less stark. This means the Monitor Audio tends to bring the listener's attention to the quality of the recording more than the Spondor.

It also makes the GX300 sparkle with classical and electronic music, although it could be said to be a little analytical with rock and jazz.

The D7, however, is a little more even-handed, and seems less concerned with the recording quality and the genre, preferring just to get into the music's groove and have a good time. Both speakers are undoubtedly superb, class-leading designs that will win many friends, but if you're in the market for either, it would be wise to hear the other first.

## IN SIGHT



- 1 22mm linear phase hybrid soft dome tweeter
- 2 180mm EP77 polymer coned mid/bass driver
- 3 180mm rigid Kevlar composite coned woofer
- 4 recessed single-wire binding posts

still able to ruthlessly render a music signal without compressing it. Spondor speakers aren't traditionally coloured, but are always more sweet than sour. The new D7 is a tad more neutral than its predecessors, and the result is improved insight, with superior low-level detailing that lets you hear right into a mix. Indeed, the D7 pulls off the clever trick of sounding smooth without hiding everything under a sea of marshmallowy bass. This made it a joy with hard, thumping techno music; Felix's *Don't You Want Me* was great fun. This design manages to string rhythms together better than any Spondor since the late great, S8e – and that's saying something.

Moving to some cool jazz of Sonar Kollektiv Orchestra's *Universal Love*, the D7 showed its ability to get into the groove. It's not one of nature's most showy music makers, rather it does surprisingly little to interfere with what it's asked to play. All you need is a gentle rhythm present and the Spondor goes looking for it. And once it's locked on, it remains fluid. This track also showcased the excellence of the treble too; it's not quite up with the best ribbons in terms of delicacy or extension, but the new tweeter comes close all the same, and integrates beautifully with the midband and bass.

If there is a criticism of the D7 it has to be the imaging. It's not bad, it's just that it doesn't match the D7's excellence in other areas.

Ultimately though, choosing a speaker is all about getting the sound

that's right for you, and for me the transparency, delicacy of touch and overall musicality – allied to that tidy, well-behaved bass and smooth treble – seals the deal.

## Conclusion

I am a Spondor fan, so I understand what it is that the company is trying to do, but sometimes its speakers are just a little too genteel. In the D7 however, I think Spondor has surpassed itself, offering all that's good about the marque in sonic terms and adding power, punch and precision. The result is a speaker that's lovely to listen to, no matter what you throw at it. It doesn't editorialise, works well in realistically sized British rooms, is a friend to your amplifier and even looks the part, too. If you're after a great all-round, affordable, high-end loudspeaker then here it is, and it's possibly Spondor's best box yet ●

## Hi-Fi Choice

### OUR VERDICT

- |                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| SOUND QUALITY<br>★★★★★   | <b>LIKE:</b> Wonderfully open and smooth speaker that's great fun to listen to; excellent build and finish |
| VALUE FOR MONEY<br>★★★★★ | <b>DISLIKE:</b> Lacks bass and treble extension and soundstage size of rivals                              |
| BUILD QUALITY<br>★★★★★   | <b>WE SAY:</b> A superb floorstander, one of Spondor's best ever boxes                                     |
| EASE OF DRIVE<br>★★★★★   |  |

### OVERALL

