



Spondor Classic 3/1 £2,730

The aesthetics might be a little 'pipe and slippers' for some. The performance is anything but

▶ DETAILS

PRODUCT
Spondor Classic 3/1

ORIGIN
UK

TYPE
Standmount loudspeaker

WEIGHT
10kg

DIMENSIONS (WxHxD)
220 x 395 x 285mm

FEATURES

- 22mm polyamide dome tweeter
- 180mm polymer mid/bass driver
- Quoted sensitivity: 88dB/1W/1m (8ohm)

DISTRIBUTOR
Spondor Audio Systems Ltd.

Introducing the second smallest member of the Classic range, which runs alongside the more contemporary D Series. As the name suggests, Classic models are designed to employ some of the thinking and materials that Spondor has employed since day one. The most significant area for this is the cabinet. Where most other speakers have gone to rigorous lengths to make the cabinet as rigid as possible, the 3/1 allows for a degree of movement you can physically feel when it's running hard. The tweeter is the same 22mm-wide surround unit used in the Classic 4/5 (HFC 470) and the rest of the range. It's partnered with a 180mm mid/bass driver made from the 'EP77' polymer that Spondor is particularly fond of, crossing over between the two at a relatively high 3.7kHz. This is the largest driver here and it's further augmented by a fairly large rear bass port. This makes the claimed 'in room' frequency response of 40Hz-25kHz feel entirely believable

in use as does the relatively benign 88dB claimed sensitivity. The Classic 3/1 supports bi-wiring via two pairs of sturdy terminals. Sturdy is a useful word in general when describing the Spondor. It isn't as showy as some here, but it is as well made as any in the group. The appearance is entirely traditional and does little to hide its large dimensions, but there's something in the Spondor's absolute lack of artifice that is either extremely cool or heroically uncool depending on your outlook. Brief mention must also be made of the matching stand, which isn't used for critical listening but complements the 3/1 brilliantly.

Sound Quality

A significant positive aspect of the Spondor's performance is the simple expedient of having the largest driver and cabinet in the test and using them to demonstrate a heft that other speakers here struggle to match. The opening drumming of *The Vulture* has a weight and force that is genuinely

impressive and it underpins a midrange that manages to balance refinement, accuracy and engagement to excellent effect.

What is notable is that this same engagement is still present with the very different requirements of *Fuel To Fire* as well. Beyond the superb presentation of the piano – again leveraging tonality and weight to excellent effect – there's an emotional content to Obel's performance that's something a little more than the sum of its parts. The haunting quality to her vocal is better expressed here than elsewhere and helps to maintain the suspension of disbelief. This is underpinned by a consistently well-rendered soundstage that extends well beyond the cabinets. It's slightly

The 180mm EP77 mid/bass driver and the cabinet are the largest in the group

easier to perceive the location of each speaker than some rivals here, but it's still usefully cohesive.

No less impressive is the amount of fine detail that is woven into the performance. It never distracts from the main musical message, but the Spondor finds little fragments of information that other speakers here miss. This means that *Revival* crackles with energy and captures the vigour of Gregory Porter and the supporting musicians in a way that is enormously entertaining. Porter himself is free of any top-end hardness and it seems to be extremely hard to provoke the 3/1 under any circumstances. These qualities mean that *Simmer* is also very well handled with Hayley Williams sounding rich and detailed as the little breaths and intonations she makes leap out of the presentation so it manages to hit that bit harder than any other standmount here ●



Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY ★★★★★	LIKE: Superb combination of impact, detail and emotional engagement
VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★	DISLIKE: Slight limit to soundstage
BUILD QUALITY ★★★★★	WE SAY: Benign and easy to use, it delivers a consistently brilliant performance across a wide range of music
EASE OF DRIVE ★★★★★	

OVERALL



Group test verdict

An exceptionally capable selection of standmount speakers, all with some singular talents. **Ed Selley** picks his winner

THE LEVEL OF ability on display in this group is unusually high and results in some unique scoring as a result. Pointing out that the JBL has the most apparent limitations in its performance has to be done at the same time as noting it costs at least £700 less than any other speaker in the group and that its treble is near the top of the pack.

After much deliberation, I find myself unable to split the Fyne Audio, PMC and Q Acoustics. These are three very different speakers, but their capabilities are all worthy of note. The Fyne's superb spaciousness,

three-dimensionality and excellent tonality is tempered by the slight lack of scale, but it's a very engaging speaker. The Q Acoustics on the other hand wants for nothing in terms of weight and impact and it also creates a fine stereo image, although the slight lack of emotional involvement might be an issue for some. The PMC, on the other hand, is rather more fun and hits very hard for such a compact speaker, but care needs to be taken to ensure it doesn't come across as a little too forward with poorer-quality recordings. All three of these speakers, if partnered with any

degree of care, though, should be able to delight.

The Bowers & Wilkins is a very successful amalgam of all of these different abilities into a single, hugely impressive speaker. It manages to combine accuracy, scale and spaciousness without losing the sense of engagement that has you wanting to keep listening and it's also beautifully made. Only a fractional hardness to the top end and some limitations to the stereo image prevent it from taking the top spot, but it's a superb performer nonetheless.



WINNER

The Spondor Classic 3/1 isn't as pretty as the B&W, but the performance is a truly sensational blend of accuracy, scale, refinement and sheer unadulterated fun. It's also beautifully made and admirably unfussy about placement and partnering equipment.



Make/model	Bowers & Wilkins 705 Signature	Fyne Audio F1.5	JBL HDI-1600	PMC twenty5.2ti	Q Acoustics Concept 300	Spondor Classic 3/1
Price	£2,700	£3,000	£1,500	£2,200	£2,500	£2,730
Sound	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Build	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Overall	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
	Beautifully finished and superbly capable, this works well in most systems	Small but impressive performer capable of exceptional imaging and fluency	An impressive performance that's not without some quirks	Entertaining and potent, it rewards with a sensibly matched system	Extremely detailed and spacious, lacks a touch of excitement, but looks fascinating	The traditional looks hide a superbly talented and engaging speaker
Website	bowerswilkins.com	fyneaudio.com	jblsynthesis.com	pmc-speakers.com	qacoustics.co.uk	spondoraudio.com

Key features						
Tweeter	25mm carbon dome	19mm Magnesium compression	25mm Teonex compression	19mm Sonoflex with 34mm surround	28mm soft dome	22mm polyamide
Mid/bass	165mm Continuum weave	125mm Iso Flare	165mm Aluminium matrix	140mm G-Weave	165mm doped paper	189mm EP77 Polymer
Impedance	8ohm (min 3.7)	8ohm	4ohm	8ohm	6ohm	8ohm (min 5.9)
Ported	Yes, rear	Yes, lower	Yes, rear	Yes, front	Yes, rear	Yes, rear
Bi-wireable	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

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Cyrus i7-XR **£2,300 HFC 473**
The i7-XR is an impressive step forward for Cyrus, taking everything that the company has traditionally done well, ironing out some of the rough edges and offering a package with a superbly comprehensive specification.



TURNTABLE:
Vertere DG-1 **£2,900 HFC 463**
The Vertere looks unusual, but it's a superb set of technical solutions to the business of building an affordable (by Vertere standards anyway) turntable that delivers sensational performance in an easy-to-use package.



MAINS CONDITIONER:
iFi Audio PowerStation **£500 HFC 464**
The PowerStation is an excellent mains conditioner. It delivers a meaningful improvement over more conventional mains devices and combines this with some useful and well-implemented additional features.

