

Spendor Classic 4/5

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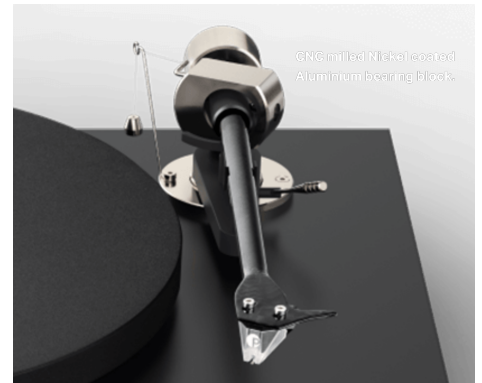


If you have a range of speakers described as a 'Classic' line, it comes with the assumption that the technology and styling will err towards the traditional. As custodian of just such a range, Spendor adheres to this thinking up to a point. This speaker may have a traditional aesthetic, but it's far from old fashioned internally.

The Classic 4/5 is the smallest of the Classic family and replaced the Classic 3/5, although, the A1 (HFC 465), which is almost identical, remains in production. Though moving away from the legendary 3/5 moniker – dating back to Spendor's involvement in the BBC original – the 4/5 retains many features of its predecessor. There are some aspects of the design, however, which are all new.

The drivers comprise a 22mm soft dome tweeter and a 150mm mid/bass. The tweeter is made in two sections, with an inner dome to deliver an extended frequency response and an outer ring that ensures dispersion is wide and the tweeter can successfully hand over to the mid/bass driver.

This latter unit is made of Spendor's own recipe 'EP77' polymer, has a relatively large phase plug and is optimised for use in a sealed cabinet. Other aspects of the driver are noteworthy too, not least the magnesium alloy chassis employed to reduce mass. The crossover between the two is 4.2kHz and connection is via a single pair of three-way posts.



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The cabinet is a combination of thin sections that comprise the sides and top, combined with a thicker and more inert front. The Classic 4/5 controls resonance by means of a visco elastic pad that is coupled to the cabinet. Spondor argues that instead of storing and slowly releasing the energy – as is the case in the thicker and more rigid assembly – the thinner panels can dissipate their energy into the pad, which converts it to heat.

By dint of this cabinet being sealed, small and fitted with compact drivers, output is understandably constrained. The low end roll-off is quoted as 55Hz and this is combined with a fairly low sensitivity of 84dB. The counter to this is that the impedance is given as 8ohm with a minimum of 6.1ohm, making this a very benign electrical load. This is combined with a respectable power handling so it is still capable of a room-filling output.

Aesthetically, the Spondor warrants its Classic badging. The proportions of the wide front and shallow depth are significantly different to most rivals at the price (see How it compares) and the design is either timeless, retro or old fashioned depending on your outlook. I have to say that I'm a fan; Spondor has been doing this long enough to know what counts as a neat design touch and what doesn't, and the Classic 4/5 is a good-looking little speaker. It is also extremely well made, with excellent veneering and solid fit and finish.

Sound quality

The sealed cabinet means it's largely unaffected by proximity to boundary walls, but it rewards some care being taken in the positioning. If you do – and in my case this is a little over 2m apart with a gentle amount of toe-in – the Spondor rewards with a wonderful soundstage in which the cabinets vanish into a cohesive and utterly convincing space in front of you. Sturgill Simpson's beguiling All Around You is a three-dimensional space with the musicians occupying clearly defined parts.

There's a simple and glaringly obvious caveat that does, of course, need to be addressed. If your enjoyment of music is as much about feeling it as well as hearing it, this is realistically never going to deliver what you need. Spondor's estimate of 55Hz feels about right in practise, but means this isn't – and never will be – a speaker for rattling your organs. The proviso to this is that the manner in which it rolls off towards the low end is sufficiently benign that, from an audio perspective, it never feels restricted or cut off. Even the suitably burly Simmer by Hayley Winters feels convincing in its presentation. No less usefully, it very rarely provokes any unwanted behaviour from the space you are using it in.

A good deal of this is down to the fabulous integration and consistency that the Spondor demonstrates from about 80Hz and up. This might not wear the 3/5 badge, but the ancestry of the 4/5 is all too readily apparent. Without any perceived emphasis to any part of the frequency response, there's a fundamental rightness to the way it makes music that sees it deliver a huge spread of different material without fear of favour.

This is because there are some new tricks present here, too. As someone who's used a pair of A1s for test work for many years now, the Classic 4/5 is more rhythmically engaging. Without ever impinging on the accuracy of what you hear, this is a speaker that seems more willing to enjoy itself. It's fast on its feet and exceptionally well controlled, which leads to the sort of head-nodding satisfaction that supersedes critical listening.

The other change to the Spondor's behaviour is subtle, but potentially important in terms of system matching. As previously noted, this is not a hard speaker to drive. It can be parked on the end of a £380 Rega io (HFC 464) and give a convincing account of itself. More than the A1, though, this is a speaker that gets better as the partnering equipment improves. In a system with a Naim Supernait 3 (HFC 456) and ND5 XS (HFC 352), it shines. The muscularity of the Supernait bolsters the low end, while the spaciousness and cohesion of the Spondor gels beautifully with the Naim's newfound openness.

The £1,600 asking price of the Classic 4/5 is something that shouldn't really be taken as a clue to the price of equipment that should be partnered with it, as it can potentially flatter less expensive components and also be a potential bargain for owners of more expensive systems too.

Conclusion

Spondor's latest standmount is something entirely in-keeping with what you might expect from the company, but also able to spring some surprises along the way. If you can accept that serious low end is only going to be achieved with the help of a sub, the manner in which it makes music is a wonderful combination of beguiling unobtrusiveness combined with genuine musical joy. The aesthetics might well be timeless, but the Classic 4/5 is also an exceptionally capable modern loudspeaker too. **ES**

DETAILS

Product: Spondor Classic 4/5

Type: Two-way standmount loudspeaker

FEATURES

- 22mm polyamide dome tweeter
- 1x 150mm polymer mid/bass driver
- Quoted sensitivity: 84dB/1W/1m (8ohm)

Read the full review in [Issue 470](#)