



Off the wall

Wall-mounted speakers tend to be under-appreciated, but **David Vivian** reckons this offering deserves your undivided attention

There is a limbo-land, somewhere between traditional audiophilia and custom install's convenient disappearing act where on-wall speakers live in quiet solitude. They might be a pragmatic solution to a paucity of floorspace, but experiencing uncharted depths of desire or a runaway pulse rate aren't, to be fair, common side effects.

That might be about to change. Not because the System Audio Legend 7.2 Silverback active wireless speakers you see before you look irresistibly come hither. As essentially wall-friendly and more muscular three-way versions of the Legend 5.2 Silverback standmounts I reviewed back in *HFC* 474, they're an even stronger evocation of what SA founder Ole Witthøft calls: "a solution for the modern audiophile". Partly it's because there's so little to it: two

speakers, two mains cables, a compact stereo wireless WiSa control hub that can be hidden away in a cupboard and a smartphone or tablet of choice for operation.

The mission is a union of true hi-fi performance and lifestyle minimalism, a coalition of wireless convenience, active driver tech and digital (DSP) tuning that more than ever makes messing around with multiple components, cables and dedicated equipment racks a tiresome waste of time. But if tweaking is still your thing, SA offers an evolving suite of downloadable DSP-implemented speaker voicings to tailor personal preference and room type. There's even a room acoustic correction app to use with your iPhone.

With a sturdily made and nicely finished MDF cabinet, the Legend 7.2 Silverback uses twin long-throw 140mm main drivers – one mid/bass and one bass – separated by a 25mm

DETAILS

PRODUCT
System Audio Legend 7.2 Silverback
ORIGIN
Denmark
TYPE
3-way active wireless wall-mounted loudspeaker
WEIGHT
7.5kg
DIMENSIONS (WxHxD)
286 x 470 x 154mm
FEATURES
• 25mm soft dome tweeter with DXT acoustic lens
• 2 x 140mm carbon-coned, long-throw main driver
• 225W Class D amplification
DISTRIBUTOR
Karma AV
WEBSITE
system-audio.com karma-av.co.uk

soft dome tweeter acting as the centre point axis, allowing the speaker to be sited vertically or horizontally. Each driver has its own combined Class D amp/DAC (from Texas Instruments) delivering a total of 225W a side.

As well as performing crossover duties, DSP is used to smooth the amplitude and phase characteristics,

There's extra solidity to the sound that permits even greater dynamic freedom

extend bass response and adjust dynamic equalisation so that the bass doesn't fade away at low listening levels. The main drivers' unusually long voice coil is claimed to allow excursions 40 percent greater than those of a similarly sized driver, for greater bass output. The cone is made from woven carbon fibre claimed to provide high internal damping and the rubber surround has built-in resonance-control rings for smoother response.

The tweeter's coated silk dome is set in a 'DXT acoustic lens' waveguide claimed to promote a smoother off-axis response, a wider sweet spot and better integration with the mid/bass drivers' output as well as eliminating cabinet diffraction effects.

The cabinets' rear baffles have neatly recessed fixing points for vertical or horizontal orientation, which explains the surprise when unboxing of finding two sets of grilles – one for 'portrait', one for 'landscape' positioning. You prime the WiSa hub for the number and positioning of the speakers via a panel on the back of each speaker.

The quoted dimensions are measured at the rear baffle, the panels of the cabinet tapering down to a slightly smaller front, making things appear marginally trimmer than they actually are. And that front baffle is separated from the rest of the enclosure by a 5mm groove inlaid with walnut. It's a classy touch, especially with the black satin finish. White satin and walnut options are also available.

Although you can connect the Silverbacks to a preamp using appropriately long interconnect cables, much neater, given the on-wall design, is to go fully wireless with the WiSa preamp/transmitter stereo hub, to which you can add analogue and digital sources such as a turntable and CD player. The hub's resolution ceiling via coaxial, optical and USB is 24-bit/192kHz. Built-in Bluetooth is joined by Chromecast (accessed via Google Home), Apple AirPlay (streaming limited to 16/44.1) and Spotify Connect.

The Legend 7.2 Silverback is claimed to have a bass response that extends down to just 30Hz (+/- 1.5dB) at moderate listening levels, something that would be virtually impossible to achieve with a passive speaker of the same size. Each speaker's internal DSP is key. "DSP is



By no means on its own in offering hi-fi quality wall-mounted speakers – DALI, Monitor Audio, Elac, JBL, to mention just a few, are just as on message when it comes to saving floor space – the field does shrink dramatically, outside of the pro sector, when you consider everything the SA Legend 7.2 Silverback has to offer. In our experience, the only compact speakers that come anywhere near offering the same level of sound quality and flexibility (and you'll have to forego the wall-mounted convenience) are SA's own Legend 5.2 Silverback standmounts.



a much more accurate tool than a passive crossover," SA boss Ole asserts. "Without any loss of quality or problems with phase, delay etc, we can shape the speakers' response at any given volume." DSP implementation extends to SA's so-called RAM tweaks – downloaded DSP 'sound optimisations' for people with acoustically challenged rooms (overly live or dull) or who simply want to change up the sound of their system. As I alluded to earlier, upgrading itch scratched... kind of.

Part of the SA Cockpit set-up/control app is something called SA Room Service, which transforms your iPhone into a measuring device. Generating a pink noise feed from the speakers, it maps the acoustics of your room. That done, it then displays a representative graph, then one with the peaks and troughs corrected and the option to implement the corrections or toggle between before and after.

Sound quality

If you decide on true, screwed-onto-the-wall mounting as opposed to wall-flush positioning as I am here for review purposes using my 24in Slate Audio stands, a couple of time-honoured audiophile rituals are removed from the setup straight away. One: the need for stands, vibration isolation pods, spikes etc. And two, how far to pull the speakers away from the room's walls and experimenting to find the exact degree of toe-in required, if at all.

Using a Primare NP5 Prisma MK2 to stream a Tidal Master of Bruno Mars' *Uptown Funk*, I'm reminded of the sonic assets that were delivered so potently by the Legend 5.2 Silverback standmounts: extraordinary energy, presence, tactility, bass power and extension, texture and colour. Except,

this time, there's a sense of extra solidity to the sound, a heavier anchor that permits even greater dynamic freedom. Tempo and rhythm are nailed as well. Is there missing toe-in focus given that the speakers are firing straight ahead? Not that I notice. We're in my larger listening room and, if anything, image placement seems unusually specific without the soundstage feeling any more hemmed in.

As well as enjoying seemingly bottomless bass from such modestly sized enclosures, playing a live version of Pat Metheny's *Are You Going With Me*, it's clear that everything from the mid frequencies north is beautifully open and lucid, Metheny's soaring guitar really singing and the whole track sounding grain-free and gloriously transparent.

Conclusion

If it's System Audio's intention with the Legend 7.2 Silverback to dispel the idea that wall-mounted speakers are somehow the poor relations of standmounts and floorstanders in pure hi-fi terms, I'll sign up to that. Yet again, it seems, active speaker tech is a digital future's best friend ●

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY ★★★★★ **LIKE:** Super sound; bass; space efficiency; build and finish
VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★ **DISLIKE:** Arguably a little too plain aesthetically
BUILD QUALITY ★★★★★ **WESAY:** Top-drawer hi-fi sonics without the complexity and clutter
FEATURES ★★★★★

OVERALL ★★★★★



You tell the WiSa hub the number and position of the speakers using a panel around the back of each cabinet