



# Towering inferno

Featuring a new tweeter, time-aligned cabinet design and 'force-balanced' woofers, SVS's Ultra Evolution Pinnacle shows the brand's boffins have been busy. [Mark Craven](#) puts it to the test

**FRESHLY MINTED BY** American loudspeaker/subwoofer brand SVS, the Ultra Evolution Pinnacle is a bold-looking floorstander with (relative to the company's previous models), a bold-looking £5,999 price tag. Meanwhile, the promotional blurb that goes with it talks about 'standing toe-to-toe with the finest speakers in the world', which is something of a bold claim.

Still, hyperbole can be expected when a new flagship model arrives, and perhaps it's better to look at the Ultra Evolution Pinnacle from a different angle. In other words: how many floorstanders around this price carry no fewer than four 8in bass drivers, and two midrange units? The answer being none that spring to mind.

## A new approach

This speaker crowns a new seven-model Ultra Evolution range that replaces the Ultra series first launched by SVS over a decade ago. If you squint a bit you can see a resemblance between the two lineups, but really a lot more has been changed than the 'Evolution' moniker might suggest. Not least the new approach to cabinet

architecture, which finds this floorstander presenting a multi-angled baffle to physically time align its drivers.

As befits the premium price, the Ultra Evolution Pinnacle appears very well put together. Yes, it's a bit bulky at 1.26m high and nearly half-a-metre deep, but it looks smart in its gloss white and gloss black finishes, while a black ash option is bit more nondescript. And if you don't want to be confronted by all those drivers, the supplied grilles are cleverly angled too.

Credit's also due to SVS for concocting a packaging design that makes unboxing this 43.9kg speaker straightforward enough even for one person – there's no need to phone a friend here!

## Diamond geezer

Back to the drivers. The symmetrical array on the Ultra Evolution Pinnacle's front baffle comprises glass-fibre 8in bass drivers sandwiching a mid-tweeter-mid array. The midrange cones, again made from glass-fibre, are 5.25in types, while the high-frequency unit is a 1in aluminium dome with a vapour-deposited diamond coating. This

### AV INFO

**PRODUCT:**  
Seven-driver  
three-way  
floorstanding  
loudspeaker

**POSITION:**  
SVS's top-of-the-  
range model

**PEERS:**  
Canton Reference 7K;  
Wharfedale Elysian 4

latter embellishment is a new SVS trick, used across the Ultra Evolution range and intended to extend the tweeter's frequency response. Protecting the dome is a diffuser/grille, its geometry informed by finite element analysis.

The front bass drivers are a part of the Ultra Evolution Pinnacle's not-so-secret weapon. Each is mirrored by a second rear-facing woofer, resulting in two 'force-balanced' pairs. The thinking here is that such a configuration delivers an even bass response and limits cabinet vibrations that might muddy the speaker's sound. It also results in a claimed low-end reach down to a cool 24Hz.

Also helping to keep the speaker rock-steady is a construction making use of 'extra-thick' 25mm MDF for the front and rear baffles, alongside 18mm MDF elsewhere, plus internal bracing. The midrange drivers and tweeter vent into their own dedicated chamber, while the bass drivers are ported via two rear ports.

While the Ultra Evolution Pinnacle is part of a range with cinema-friendly options, including a centre channel and height/on-wall Elevation speaker, it was tested here in stereo guise – we'll return to the series in a

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future issue for a multichannel array based around the more affordable Tower or Titan floorstanders.

### Family traits

With a two-channel feed from a punchy Arcam AVR850, SVS's new speaker proved itself to be a chip off the old block. Bass weight and presence were exceptional for the price range. Low-end Foley effects punched hard and deep, while basslines and drums in film soundtracks and music were powerfully defined.

The potency of this bass performance demands some thought is given to cabinet placement to ensure it doesn't get swampy – SVS also suggests toeing the cabinets to tighten up the central image – but those using the Ultra Evolution Pinnacle with an AVR or two-channel amp with room correction (which are becoming more commonplace) are more likely to get a balanced output.

Don't think this floorstander's appeal begins and ends with its woofer quartet. Playing *The Equalizer 3* (4K Blu-ray), it brought a delicate, refined touch to the depictions of Robert McCall (Denzel Washington) living the



### SPECIFICATIONS

**DRIVERS:** 1 x 1in diamond vapour-coated aluminium dome tweeter; 4 x 8in glass-fibre woofers (2 x rear-facing); 2 x 5.25in glass-fibre midranges **ENCLOSURE:** Twin-rear ported **FREQUENCY RESPONSE (CLAIMED):** 24Hz-40kHz (+/-3dB) **SENSITIVITY (CLAIMED):** 88dB **IMPEDANCE (CLAIMED):** 6ohm (nominal) **POWER HANDLING (CLAIMED):** 300W **DIMENSIONS (EXCL. FEET):** 1,260(h) x 300(w) x 460(d)mm **WEIGHT:** 43.9kg

### TESTED WITH



**THE EQUALIZER 3:** There's a little less action in this third (and final?) outing for Denzel Washington's vigilante, but when it comes its impressively cathartic and gruesome. The clarity of Sony's 4K Blu-ray encode means you'll see every drop of blood, while the Atmos soundtrack peppers you with precisely placed details.

good life in the Italian coastal town. Street and cafe scenes had plenty of detail, and the stereo soundstage plenty of depth. Another boon is the Ultra Evolution Pinnacle doesn't exaggerate treble, keeping effects distinct without veering into brash territory. When McCall decides enough is enough and infiltrates the villain's house, there are myriad sharp sounds (often involving knives, or broken glass) that are effectively rendered.

Other speakers around the price can sound sweeter and more spacious in this regard, as becomes more clear when listening to music. That said, the Ultra Evolution Pinnacle's presentation is easily on a par with its price, so that a run-through of Dire Straits' *Brothers in Arms* album (CD) was notable for both the dynamic flair the speaker brought to 'Money for Nothing' and 'The Man's Too Strong', and the gentler, more nuanced sounds of the title track.

Additionally, few loudspeakers I've heard this side of £10,000 manage to convey so much scale and drop so low with real authority. This was evident in the way it spread Marcelo Zarvos's occasionally bonkers score for *The Equalizer 3* across the front of my room, really digging into its bassy effects and low piano notes, ramping up the tension while our hero plays hide-and-seek with Vincent in the darkened villa. Similarly, the size and ground-shaking weight conveyed during *Jurassic World* (4K Blu-ray) when the Indominus Rex and T-Rex go *dino-a-dino* amidst the theme park ruins was astonishing.

### Hard-hitting

The Ultra Evolution Pinnacle marks something of a departure for SVS, being its most expensive speaker to date by some margin. Yet it lives up to the billing of a flagship design with a very impressive all-round performance that combines the kind of hard-hitting dynamism and bass output the brand is known for with detail and musicality. And you know what? Just a pair of these provided oodles of entertainment with film soundtracks. Makes me wonder what an Ultra Evolution surround array would sound like ■

**1.** The Ultra Evolution Pinnacle has five front-facing drivers, which can be hidden by angled grilles, plus two rear woofers

**2.** SVS's new range includes a centre model, two further floorstanders, two bookshelf options and an on-wall/on-ceiling FX speaker

### HCC VERDICT



#### SVS Ultra Evolution Pinnacle

→ £5,999 → [www.svsound.com](http://www.svsound.com)

**WE SAY:** SVS's best speaker yet, the Ultra Evolution Pinnacle offers exceptional value for money and will have immediate appeal if scale, drama and full-range sonics are your thing.