



System Audio Silverback 1 £2,200



Few are quite as steeped in the idea of active wireless speakers being the way forward as System Audio

▶ DETAILS

PRODUCT
System Audio Silverback 1 + WiSA Stereo Hub

ORIGIN
Denmark

TYPE
Active 2-way standmount speaker

WEIGHT
4.9kg each

DIMENSIONS (WxHxD)
310 x 325 x 135mm

FEATURES

- 25mm soft dome tweeter
- 140mm paper pulp mid/bass driver
- Claimed power: 80W (each)

DISTRIBUTOR
Karma-AV

Although System Audio, the Danish company – founded and run by Ole Witthøft – makes a fine range of passive speakers, these are mirrored by its active Silverback counterparts which, overall, have soaked up the lion's share of critical acclaim, including numerous EiSA awards.

Smallest of these is the Silverback 1, a versatile two-way design that can be mounted on a wall with a single screw fixing or placed on a stand or bookshelf. Roughly the size of a sheet of A4 paper in frontal area, shallow in depth and with a slightly swept-back baffle, it's quietly stylish without being conspicuous and, Cinderella-like, can slip into places others here cannot.

There's nothing dainty about the specification, with 80W a side of Class D amplification powering SA's custom, long-throw 140mm mid/bass driver and waveguide mounted 25mm soft

dome tweeter, while the system claims a frequency range of 45Hz – 25kHz. Although the SB1s can be used as plain active speakers with long interconnects running from a preamp to their RCA socket inputs, wireless comes courtesy of WiSA, the standard which allows high-quality audio to be transmitted without the drawbacks of Bluetooth compression or wi-fi latency, and is most conveniently achieved with SA's Stereo Hub. As well as being Roon Ready, this compact unit features Google Chromecast, Apple AirPlay 2, Bluetooth 5.0, DLNA UpNP and Spotify Connect built in with DSP support up to 24-bit/192kHz thanks to the built-in Texas Instruments DAC. It also has three optical, one coaxial and RCA line-level ins, plus HDMI and USB, and comes with a classy metal remote. Disappointingly, there isn't an Ethernet port for a cable connection with a router.

Sound quality

Speaker setup and a simple if rudimentary room correction service come with the 'SA Cockpit' app, available for both Android and iOS. By far the smallest of all the active wireless speakers here, one look might

suggest managing your expectations to avoid disappointment. But it really isn't necessary. Even more than its larger System Audio siblings, the Silverback 1 defies reason, delivering a cavernous soundstage that bears no relation to its dinky dimensions and renders *Combat Continuum's* cosmic conceits with full-on conviction. Now, let's not get carried away here. These slim, A4-sized boxes simply can't muster the ultimate loudness, bass depth and power of The Sevens, let alone the musclebound towers. But the shortfall of sheer grunt isn't nearly as large as you might think. And, within its own performance envelope, a zone of such pitch-perfect excellence pertains that not even the multi-talented KEF can best it.

It offers a cavernous soundstage that bears no relation to its dinky dimensions

The SB1's is a sonic profile completely devoid of harshness. Beautifully clear, quick on its feet and almost studio-monitor strong in the areas of resolution and focus, it's honest but doesn't punish rozier recordings, rather managing to imbue them with hitherto unrealised life and structure. Not everyone may agree, but this is what I want my hi-fi to do. More intimate and intricate fare such as Lizzy McAlpine's glorious *Erase Me* positively shimmers with a feathery grace it's impossible not to relax into it's so harmonically sweet, soulful and seductive.

Yet the SB1's robust reserves of grip, dynamic expression and low-level resolving power come to the fore on the ever likeable *The Outskirts Of Town*. David Sanborn's phrasing is exquisitely captured, the orchestral interludes sharp and sonorous, listenability sky high ●

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY
★★★★★

VALUE FOR MONEY
★★★★★

BUILD QUALITY
★★★★★

FEATURES
★★★★★

OVERALL
★★★★★

LIKE: Outrageous sound-to-size ratio; stylistic reserve; superb sonics; WiSA hub

DISLIKE: Nothing

WE SAY: An SA Silverback hits gold again, a mini miracle

