



System Audio **Legend 5.2 Silverback** **+ WiSA stereo hub £2,800**

This modestly priced twin standmount setup looks nothing much out of the ordinary. Prepare for a shock

DETAILS

PRODUCT
 System Audio Legend 5.2 Silverback + WiSA stereo hub

ORIGIN
 Denmark

TYPE
 2-way active wireless standmount loudspeaker

WEIGHT
 6.7kg (each)

DIMENSIONS
 (WxHxD)
 190 x 320 x 265mm

FEATURES
 • 25mm tweeter; 114mm long-throw mid/bass driver
 • RCA analogue; MM phono stage; coaxial; optical; XLR in; Ethernet; USB; Bluetooth
 • Claimed power: 150W (each)

DISTRIBUTOR
 Karma AV

System Audio's pitch is it's all about high fidelity and something approaching an end-game standard can be achieved with two active speakers, two mains cables, a small, plainly styled stereo wireless control hub that can be hidden away in a cupboard (SA's preference) and a smartphone or tablet. Surely that's the future.

The mission is prosecuted on several fronts – with hub-based WiSA wireless connectivity, an evolving suite of downloadable DSP-implemented speaker voicings and a room acoustic correction app to use with your iPhone.

The Danish company's active Legend 5.2 Silverback is a two-way rear-ported standmount toting a 114mm long-throw mid/bass driver, crossed over in DSP to a 25mm soft dome tweeter and acoustic lens. Each driver has its own DAC and dedicated Class D amplifier using the same digital tech as Steinway Lyngdorf, with a total of 150W a side. As well as performing crossover duties, DSP is used to smooth the amplitude and phase characteristics, extend bass response and adjust

dynamic equalisation so the bass doesn't fade away at low levels.

With the WiSA preamp/transmitter stereo hub 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-bit/44.1kHz) and Spotify Connect.

The latest version of the Legend 5 Silverback – the 5.2 – has extended bass response down to a remarkable claimed 25Hz at moderate listening levels, updated protection and a lower crossover point with adjusted slope.

Sound quality

The restrained and rather ordinary looking Silverback gives us more listening options than the others here and, uniquely, the ability to go wired via balanced XLR interconnects. There's also the suite of downloadable and constantly evolving RAM Tweaks that use the speakers' internal DSP to modify voicings to taste and something called Room Service – a

rudimentary room correction app for your iPhone that features before and after overlaid frequency response graphs and is more sophisticated than the Pearl Akoya's simple calibration routine. The Silverback currently ships with the latest RT200x RAM Tweak installed – it's the one I prefer.

Fed by the WiSA hub, the Silverback 5.2 almost defies reason, in one respect sounding like seriously talented floorstanders with outstanding bass power and extension. That would be remarkable enough. But, at the same time, it retains the qualities of rhythmic alacrity, agility, pinpoint imaging, midband clarity and low colouration associated with a top-drawer compact monitor. And, in this company, as a self-contained proposition, that's something unprecedented.

The only speaker in the group that can go wired via balanced XLR interconnects

Joni singing *California* has the usual cut-glass clarity and is meticulously assembled across a broad and deep soundstage, but the track exhibits more body with a warmer, smoother, silkier tonality that's even harder to resist. Elvis Costello's *Magnificent Hurt* isn't quite as stark and spiky as it is with, say, the KEF, but is delivered with still greater weight, dynamic conviction and textural contrasts.

System Audio boss Ole Withøft contends this has as much to do with the intrinsic excellence of the passive 5.2 Legend as it does the alchemy of active Class D amplification and DSP, but the upshot seems to endow the Silverback with a more luxurious, fleshed-out, muscular and ultimately balanced style of presentation than anything else in this active/wireless roundup. And that's saying something ●

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY



VALUE FOR MONEY



BUILD QUALITY



FEATURES



OVERALL



★ ★ ★ ★ ★

LIKE: Build and design; flexibility; sublime performance; RAM DSP profiles

DISLIKE: Nothing of note

WE SAY: If you want terrific sound without the shenanigans, nothing does it better

Group test verdict

It's been a wireless week of hard-fought dramas and delights but, with the final speaker unplugged, **David Vivian** is ready to name a winner

GOING WIRELESS STRIKES at the heart of what it is to be an audiophile: nailing system synergy with carefully auditioned separate components; tweaking and fine-tuning cables and interconnects; strategically upgrading the amp and speakers. Buying a destination rather than another leg of 'the journey' closes down the alchemy of the hi-fi hobby. That said, there can be no denying the convenience and efficiency active wireless systems provide. The real kicker, though, and something stoutly confirmed by this roundup, is that the sonics really do hold up.

Although neither of the single-box systems can compete with two-speaker stereo, in our sub-category tussle, I'm going to give the nod to the Omnia for its ability to conjure such an expansive and precisely ordered soundstage, though for full-blooded, room-filling, fun and competitive connectivity, the JBL L75ms ticks the boxes. Fourth goes to the solid balls of sound from Cabasse, an irresistible blend of design, bonkers power and, in the final reckoning, an enjoyably physical, spacious style of music making that's impossible to ignore.

The first podium place goes to the extraordinarily capable Linn Series 3 301 and 302 stereo sidekick. A serious contender for top honours, it would have medalled higher if not for the jaw-dropping price and streaming-only brief. But, oh, the sound. If you're happy to shell out, the streaming rewards are huge. KEF's Meta equipped sequel to its evergreen LS50 Wireless is runner up. It's one of those 'can't go wrong' type of products that inspires confidence, covers all the bases, looks and sounds great, and is a joy to use and live with.



The Legend 5.2 Silverback's flexibility, tweakability and knockout sonics ensure that it excels where it really counts and delivers a sound-per-pound proposition that simply rewrites the rules in the sector. The System Audio is an unalloyed triumph.

Make/model	Cabasse Pearl Akoya	JBL L75ms	KEF LS50 Wireless II	Linn Series 3 301 + 302	Sonus faber Omnia	System Audio Legend 5.2 Silverback + WiSA hub
Price	£2,950	£1,500	£2,500	£6,900	£1,600	£2,800
Sound	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Build	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Ease of drive	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Overall	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
	They might be small, they might not be cheap, but they are solid balls of sound	This big beast single chassis doesn't do light and fluffy, but it does bring the beef	Arguably the original all-in-one superstar continues to show how it's done	It doesn't do much but stream but, be in not doubt, this is a stellar performer	Its sonic force won't blow you away, but its sound will take you to a happy place	The Silverback is the most convincing reason yet to ditch the cables
Website	cabasse.com	jblsynthesis.com	uk.kef.com	linn.co.uk	sonusfaber.com	system-audio.com

Key features	Cabasse Pearl Akoya	JBL L75ms	KEF LS50 Wireless II	Linn Series 3 301 + 302	Sonus faber Omnia	System Audio Legend 5.2 Silverback + WiSA hub
Streaming	24-bit/192kHz	32-bit/192kHz	24-bit/192kHz	24-bit/192kHz	24-bit/192kHz	24-bit/192kHz
HDMI	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Class D	No	Yes	Yes + AB	Yes	Yes	Yes
AirPlay	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bluetooth	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

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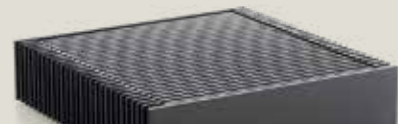
CD TRANSPORT:
Cambridge Audio CXC **£400 HFC 401**

Most of the systems here have digital inputs, so a great way of playing 'legacy' CDs is a transport. The neat looking CXC is the cheapest high-quality silver disc spinner we own, and cracking value too.



MUSIC SERVER:
Roon Nucleus **£1,700 HFC 439**

Making use of Tidal as an integrated part of this wireless all-in-one roundup, the Nucleus is a lovely piece of network hardware and offers outstanding performance with multi-room support.



TURNTABLE:
Rega Planar 2 **£500 HFC 413**

For the money, it's hard to better the Planar 2 which comes with a decent Rega Carbon MM cartridge pre-installed. It's even good enough to work well with the broad bandwidth SA Silverback via its WiSA stereo hub.

