

Group test verdict

As the dust settles on this month's loudspeaker face off, **David Price** provides us with the final verdict on how the six models really stack up

I AM SURPRISED by how diverse this group turns out to be. That's why it's important to try them if at all possible with the rest of your system before buying.

Mission's SX2 sounds very good in isolation, but in this company it is overshadowed. It's nicely built and has an affable, engaging and upfront sound, but by the standards of the group it is a tad muddled.

The Dali Ikon 2 is a good speaker with especially fine treble, but it doesn't give the sort of scale or bass power that many others managed here, and the overall finish and

styling is frankly sub-par in this very impressive company.

Focal's Aria 906 proves to be an excellent all rounder, the sort of thing most listeners will enjoy and few will take a dislike to. On the end of a decent system it's capable of truly impressive results and has the bonus of being very efficient for those running smaller amps in larger rooms, but is beaten here at the price.

Things get trickier now, as we have three superb but very different speakers, and the ranking really depends more on the buyer than the product itself – but here goes! Placed

third is the Monitor Audio Silver, only because it spreads its abilities a little more thinly and doesn't excel in one specific area. It gives a powerful and expansive sound that's very enjoyable and highly detailed. The standard of finish is better even than the KEF, which is saying something, and the Silver 2 is a remarkable value loudspeaker.

The KEF is another superb speaker with the best imaging here, plus excellent detailing and fine tonality. With most systems it would likely win the group, but it's just beaten here by the ATC.



WINNER

With a powerful amplifier, a smooth source and properly positioned, ATC's SCM7 is capable of a wonderful flowing musicality that gets into the groove like no other here. In a well-matched system, you will be amazed at its rhythmic and dynamic alacrity.



Make/model	ATC SCM7	Dali Ikon 2 Mk2	Focal Aria 906	KEF LS50	Mission SX2	Monitor Audio Silver 2	
Price	£810	£639	£798	£800	£700	£650	
Sound	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	
Value	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	
Build	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	
Ease of drive	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	
Overall	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	
Key features	The most musically convincing here, but you'll need a serious system to drive it. A worthy winner	A pleasant, engaging speaker with a lovely, sparkling treble – but a little on the bright side of life	A great all rounder with a smooth, easy, open sound; also great for lower-power amplifiers	Outstanding design with a wonderful, room-filling sound – plus loads of detail. Looks great, too	Very exciting listen, with an upfront and engaging sound; nice styling rounds off the package	Extremely high achiever right across the board; superlative finish, powerful sound	

Key features	ATC SCM7	Dali Ikon 2 Mk2	Focal Aria 906	KEF LS50	Mission SX2	Monitor Audio Silver 2
Dual concentric	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Three-way	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
Bi-wire	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Reflex port	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Infinite baffle	Yes	No	No	No	No	No

TRY WITH THESE

CD PLAYER:
Audiolab 8200CD **£700**

Still one of our favourite mid-priced silver disc spinners, it gives nothing away in performance terms to any rival and provides a powerful, detailed source for them to work with. Its digital inputs give it added DAC functionality, and very good it sounds too!



INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER:
Creek Evolution 50A **£700**

A little less lush in tonality than the Arcam, this is more suited to the likes of the even-handed Monitor Audio and the warmer Focal, and also makes the Mission sing. It's an excellent, open sounding amplifier with lots of power at the price and fine dynamics; one of Creek's best value amps.



INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER:
Exposure 3010S2 **£1,350**

All the speakers here will respond well to a really good premium-priced integrated amplifier, and the Exposure is just this. Compared to the cheaper Creek it is a good deal more transparent and controlled, yet is also more musical. Its powerful sound will make any speaker here sing.

