

Affordable and cost no object? How can these two words appear together when they are diametrically opposite of what they mean? SVS choose these words to describe the revamped S series loudspeakers, Ron, the head honcho for SVS must have something up his sleeve when he coined this statement!

The S series loudspeakers from SVS are a line of affordable loudspeakers for stereo or multi-channel applications. The first generation of the S series was well reviewed so as they say, a hard act to follow! So what does generation 2 offers? Finished in tough textured vinyl wrap, this finishing is more enduring than being decorative. But that's as far as the 'affordable' part of this range of speaker ends.

The cost no object begins under the skin:

- Improved crossovers – smoother response, better phase integration between the drive units, lower distortion, improved dynamics and transparency with better power handling.
- A new soft dome tweeter – smoother response, better dispersion, lower resonance characteristics, better heat dissipation hence improved power handling as well.
- New midbass drive units - with soft dust cap for smoother performance in the upper frequency range, lower distortion and more accurate response with lower colouration.
- An improved and stronger (braced with thicker panels) cabinet with a new non-defractive metal grille.

S Class Home Cinema

SVS revamps the S series

I think SVS should call this something else – it seems to be an entirely whole new range of speakers!

Aesthetically, the vanilla flavoured S series wins no awards for looks, though hiding them behind curtains seems a bit drastic. The curved edge on the side panels departs from the usual V-groove's 'cut and fold' cabinet construction.



The cabinet is internally braced, I believe that may only apply to the STS-02, the smaller speakers do not necessarily benefit from bracing. That said, the perforated metal grille is a departure from speakers in this price point, the last I remembered metal grilles resides with the likes of Martin Logans, not some box speakers selling from \$350 a pair!

The range offers a pair of bookshelf, a pair of floor stander, a center channel and a dipole for surround applications. Depending on the size of your room, you can mix and match – for example using 2 pairs of the smallest bookshelf, the SBS-02 for front and rear, the SCS-02 center and any one of SVS subwoofer or all the way to the STS-02 floorstanding with the SSS-02 surround, the SCS-02 center and any SVS subwoofer combo. Pick and choose to suit your room or budget!

Here we take the middle ground, we used three SCS-02 (S\$650 for a pair and S\$350 for the center with its dedicated table top pedestal) in a LCR configuration – meaning the left, center and right loudspeakers are identical – giving a seamless sound field from far left to far right. The SBS-02 (S\$350 pair) was employed for the rear as the surround dipoles SSS-02 (S\$399 each) is not available as yet though that would be an ideal package. The new SB-12NSD (S\$1350) subwoofer provides the point one in the equation. For the audition, a Denon AVR1911 receivers is employed. Playback with Blu-ray, DVD and stereo CD material.

In the realm of high end AV, there is always the amount of sophistication built into the system to

enable the custom integrator to earn his keep. That is no longer the case when manufacturers like Denon (Yamaha, Onkyo, et al.) start putting into their receivers automated system calibration using Audyssey. This enable the buyer to bring the receiver home, setup the cables, set up the microphone and run the calibration software with nothing more than a tap on the remote. The system then send a series of sweep tones to check the system for correct speaker setup (ie not mixing up any of the channels with something else), level setting, phase setting, in-room acoustic calibration and so on. Usually within an hour of unboxing the receiver, the system is good to go!

Setting up the S series is no different from any other 5.1 system, stands while not exactly mandatory for the front left and right speakers, would be ideal for sonic considerations. Even then the non-resonant nature of the SCS-02 makes for an ideal wall mount speaker using brackets though strong brackets are recommended due to its 8.6 Kg weight. It would be nice to have the SSS-02 dipole surrounds but they are just starting to go into production and will only be available a couple of months after this issue is published. May be we will do a follow up later.

With the subwoofer set at the crossover point of 80 Hz with the speakers set to 'small', this gives a well-balanced sound as it crossover from the main speakers to the subwoofer without me being able to discern the presence of the subwoofer's or be able to localized its location. Firing up the system, we start off with a Blu-ray disc – Jumper. There is a lot of high density in the audio mix – for example when Hayden Christensen leaps through space

and time, to render that tremendous 'whoosh' of air that is to be felt as much as heard, is pretty demanding on the system. The punch and extension of the SVS setup was impressive in the way it moves an appreciable amount of air with enough deep bass extension to make the effect believable.

Speech intelligibility on this system rates a high score, voices were natural without undue emphasis – eg too bassy, which affects deep male voices or sounding too sibilant from poor quality drive units. The balance of the SVS is just about perfect. Separation of speech from a dense mix of outright cacophony is a severe test of both the speakers and the AV receiver's ability to keep things in check. I can expect this to be the domain of say, for instance, a high-end THX speaker system with a high performance Processor/multi-channel amplifier system. Not something that cost less than \$5000 for the whole package! In this respect, the pairing of the Denon receiver and the SVS system is commendably outstanding – in performance and in the value-for-money stakes.

While it may not be surprising the SVS system perform admirably on Home Cinema applications, can it hack it on two-channel stereo? Through the Denon receiver, the system plays in a 2.1 configuration. While the SVS system will not threaten the existence of the likes of Wilson Audio or Revel Acoustics, it has enough going for



the occasional CD or MP3 through a music server or even an iPod. The character is a little drier and less fluid sounding than say a nice little speaker like the Chario Piccolo Star (review elsewhere in this issue) or the Sonus faber Toy monitor, it doesn't sound like a dog's dinner either. Again, the tight and extended low end of the SB12 NSD helps to steer the sound away from being too clinical.

The SVS S 02 series is a well-balanced package for home cinema enthusiasts to consider. At under \$3000 for the system, there are no major complaints, in fact it should be lauded for its accomplishments – well built, good sounding, well balanced, well integrated with the subwoofer, nice finishing if a little lacking in the Gucci department. Can you buy a similar system for the asking price of the complete SVS package as above? Yes, it would be stupid to assume otherwise, you even have options from some well-respected names in loudspeakers. The only question I would ask of you is this, does these 'well-respected' loudspeaker manufacturers makes a better sub than SVS? Can they integrate the subwoofer as effectively as SVS does with the S series speakers? You may buy other great 5 point speakers from anybody but SVS offers a great 5 point 1 system better than anybody I know of.