



Tangent gets in line

This smart-looking Danish 5.1 speaker pack gives buyers a lot for their money. **Danny Phillips** lets it take him on a trip to the Mine of Moria and beyond

IN A WORLD Cup of speaker brands, Denmark would field a pretty decent side. DALI, Dynaudio and Bang & Olufsen are the established star players, but now a relatively new name is coming off the bench to make an impact. That name is Tangent.

For the last 20 years (a blink of an eye in hi-fi terms) this Danish brand has been creating speakers that blend sleek Scandinavian design with efficient audio quality, but always with one eye on affordability.

Its Spectrum series encapsulates everything Tangent is about. Stylish, well-made and nicely priced, the range started life with the Spectrum X4 and X5 bookshelf speakers, alongside the active/Bluetooth X5.

But in August last year the range was bolstered by the addition of three new models – the X6 three-way floorstander, the Spectrum XC centre and the XSW-8 subwoofer.

With the range complete, Tangent has been able to assemble the 5.1 system you see before you, using a pair of X6s on front duty and the X4s as surround speakers, supported by the XC and XSW-8.

At £600 a pair, the X6 floorstanders are reasonably affordable but their design is anything but cheap. In fact,

build quality is superb for the money, with hefty cabinets and smooth matt finishes giving them a premium feel, despite the lack of curves. A tap on the side gives out a reassuringly dull thud – testament to an inert construction designed to reduce cabinet colouration and resonance.

Colour-wise they come in a choice of polar white or midnight black, and my white samples (pictured) are proper head-turners. Particularly eye-catching are the pre-attached walnut plinths, which have a slight Ikea showroom vibe but form an undeniably striking contrast with the white finish. Colour-matched mesh grilles on the front protect the drivers from wandering fingers, while on the back is a bass reflex port and a pair of gold-plated banana plug-compatible binding posts.

Also pleasing is the X6's compact size, which gives you plenty of placement leeway. Some floorstanders suck up the space around them, but the X6s just slot in with minimal fuss. At 923mm high by 166mm wide, they won't look out of place in a medium-sized living room.

In terms of driver tech, there's nothing revolutionary to report, just a good old-fashioned array of cones and domes. The X6s use two 5in mid/bass paper drivers and the same 1in dome fabric tweeter used across the entire system to

ensure tonal consistency. Like the X6, the horizontally-mounted XC is a manageable size, making under-TV rack placement a possibility. Its dual 4in mid/bass drivers flank the tweeter.

A single 4in driver joins the tweeter on the smaller X4 standmount, which can be wall- or ceiling-mounted using optional hardware.

Onto the XSW-8. This hasn't been drafted in from a pool of pre-existing subwoofers; rather, it's Spectrum through and through, reflected in the perfectly-matched white/walnut styling and grey mesh grille. It's cube-shaped, solidly built and so compact you'll hardly notice it, although bass fiends may not be immediately impressed by its 8in front-firing driver and 90W amplifier spec.

Value for money

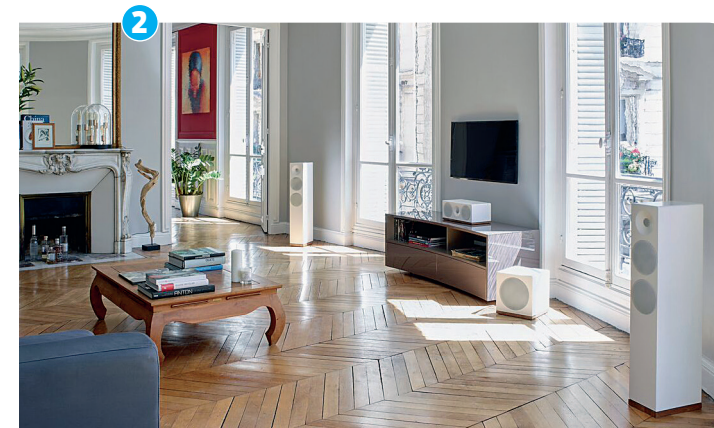
In action the Spectrum package delivers a clean, neutral sound that complemented anything I threw at it. Power and detail go beyond what I'd expect for the money, and the sub fleshes out the soundstage with solid, agile bass.

With practically the same drivers employed in each speaker, there's a lovely sense of cohesion across the system and fluid movement between channels. It's dynamic and attacking without any obvious brashness, and when the action hots up it's capable of a big soundstage with convincing scale.

First up was *The Fellowship of the Ring* (Blu-ray), and having not seen it for a while the Tangent reacquainted me in style. It's bursting with delicate detail from the off, from the rural murmur of the Shire to the eerie atmosphere inside the Mine of Moria, and the sequence where Pippin knocks the armour into the well provided a stunning display of this system's detail and surround prowess. The echo expands into space and the clank of metal has the necessary impact without making me wince.

When the Cave Troll attacks, it's a hoot – the beast's footsteps are big and beefy, while metallic weapons, voices and arrows fizz at you from every speaker. The soundstage gets a little congested, and the sub sounds like it's striving from time to time, but it's more composed than you might imagine from an affordable system being driven at stupidly loud volumes.

Liam Neeson's opening narration to *The Huntsman: Winter's War* (Blu-ray) has remarkable presence and detail. As he purrs and croaks in his distinctive Northern Irish accent, the XC renders it with considerable accuracy, adding smooth sibilance and subtle bass for extra realism. Sadly the same is true for Chris Hemsworth and Jessica Chastain's 'Scottish' accents, laid bare in all their garbled glory.



SPECIFICATIONS

Spectrum X6

DRIVE UNITS: 2 x 5in mid/bass drivers; 1 x 1in soft dome tweeter **ENCLOSURE:** Bass reflex **FREQUENCY RESPONSE (CLAIMED):** 50Hz-20kHz **SENSITIVITY (CLAIMED):** 88dB **POWER HANDLING (CLAIMED):** 200W **DIMENSIONS:** 923(h) x 166(w) x 343(d)mm **WEIGHT:** 13kg

Spectrum XC

DRIVE UNITS: 2 x 4in mid/bass drivers; 1 x 1in soft dome tweeter **ENCLOSURE:** Bass reflex **FREQUENCY RESPONSE (CLAIMED):** 55Hz-20kHz **SENSITIVITY (CLAIMED):** N/A **POWER HANDLING (CLAIMED):** 100W **DIMENSIONS:** 240(h) x 465(w) x 198(d)mm **WEIGHT:** 6.2kg

Spectrum X4

DRIVE UNITS: 1 x 4in mid/bass driver; 1 x 1in soft dome tweeter **ENCLOSURE:** Bass reflex **FREQUENCY RESPONSE (CLAIMED):** 65Hz-20kHz **SENSITIVITY (CLAIMED):** 88dB **POWER HANDLING (CLAIMED):** 200W **DIMENSIONS:** 275(h) x 146(w) x 198(d)mm **WEIGHT:** 7.75kg

Spectrum XSW-8

DRIVE UNITS: 1 x 8in woofer **ENCLOSURE:** Sealed **FREQUENCY RESPONSE:** 31Hz-250kHz **ONBOARD POWER:** 90W **REMOTE CONTROL:** No **DIMENSIONS:** 280(h) x 270(w) x 275(d)mm **WEIGHT:** 12kg **CONNECTIONS:** High-level speaker inputs; analogue phono input

PARTNER WITH



TANGENT EVO WALL BRACKET: The Spectrum X4 speakers can be wall-mounted using this optional bracket, initially designed for Tangent's EVO range. £50 gets you a pair, which will mount the speaker at a slight downwards-facing angle.

Later, as the Huntsman fends off an attacker outside a tavern in the pouring rain, the combat is agile and exciting. The subwoofer pulses tightly with each punch and rain hisses around the soundstage with welcome clarity.

Another disc switch to *Jurassic World* confirms the Tangent's ability to entertain. When the *Indominus Rex* escapes from its enclosure, the system ratchets up the tension with huge footsteps, menacing monster snarls and a dramatic score.

Put on some music and system's inherent neutrality gives you an honest and insightful performance. Instruments are rendered with plenty of detail and the spacious soundstage has the feel of a live performance. The subwoofer gels it all together nicely, and vocals sound natural.

Gobble it up

Overall, this Spectrum 5.1 set is a fine option at the price. It's well made, easy on the eye and sounds generally great with movies and music, while accepting a lack of refinement that marks it out as not a high-end option. Those in the market for a 5.1 system that won't break the bank or gobble up living space should investigate. ■

HCC VERDICT



Tangent Spectrum 5.1

→ £1,300 → www.tangent-audio.com

WE SAY: With its gorgeous design, solid build and impressive performance, Tangent's 5.1 system is well worth a look if you want full-fat home cinema without stretching your cash.

1. 1in dome tweeters and paper mid/bass drivers are used across the Spectrum range

2. Tangent's polar white finish is designed to blend well in living room setups