



Six appeal

There's more to this tastefully svelte floorstander from Denmark than its lifestyle aesthetic as **David Vivian** discovers

Some speakers just seem to fit, merging effortlessly with their homely surroundings rather than fighting against them for attention. It's usually because they're not flaunting their tech bling or trying hard to impress with a cabinet curvier than the Nürburgring. Of course, this self-conscious restraint can tip over into minimalist 'lifestyle' design where becoming part of the furniture is the desired result and takes precedent over any notion of a sonic imperative. It's a tricky balancing act, but Danish audio practitioner Tangent reckons it's pitched it about right with its Spectrum range. The land of achingly tasteful sideboards and soaring audio aspirations is an old hand at nailing

Here's a presentation with body and brio that also possesses crisp timing

the 'looks good/sounds good' equation when it comes to speakers and, doing much to establish Tangent's desired direction of travel, the X4 and X5 (see page 35) standmount models in the series have delivered handsomely in this respect, and for enticingly modest outlays.

The Spectrum X6 is a sleek and slim passive, bass reflex-loaded three-way floorstander. What aesthetic flourishes there are – the individual colour-coded mesh grilles and contrasting sliver of walnut base plinth – are simple and subtle, cute enough to please the eye but framed in an otherwise unobtrusively conventional, square-cornered tower. The choice of just two matt satin finishes is equally pared back and clean cut: 'midnight black' or, as supplied for review, 'polar white'. Showroom appeal is high. Not only does the Spectrum X6 look more expensive than it costs, the standard of build and impression of quality is more impressive still – right up there with the smartest budget boxes from

Monitor Audio and KEF. The enclosures, constructed mostly from 18mm-thick MDF, feel properly sturdy and knuckle-rap inert and are claimed to be low in colouration and resonance.

Tangent isn't the newest kid on the block (the name stretches back 50 years) but neither is it exactly a stalwart of the UK audio scene, though it seems to be gaining traction with its latest products. In its current incarnation, the company set out its stall in 1996 and is one of the two Danish outfits in the huge French AV Industry group that enjoys something of a Gallic slant with fellow brands including Elipson, Lumene, Highland Audio and Ateca. As well as speakers, Tangent makes amplifiers (the Ampster BT is a cracking performer that can be paired with the X4 to form a natty desktop system – HFC 412) and a huge range of stylish DAB/FM tuners.

The Spectrum X6 certainly doesn't stint on driver fire power. Teamed with what's described as a 'wide dispersion' 25mm soft fabric dome tweeter slightly recessed from the baffle plane by a waveguide are two 130mm, coated paper-coned, long-throw mid-bass drive units in a 2.5-way arrangement, the midrange and bass driver sharing the same

DETAILS

PRODUCT
Tangent Spectrum X6

ORIGIN
Denmark

TYPE
3-way floorstanding loudspeaker

WEIGHT
12kg

DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
166 x 923 x 268mm

FEATURES

- 1x 25mm fabric dome tweeter
- 2x 130mm coated paper mid/bass drivers
- Quoted sensitivity: 88dB/1W/1m (6ohm)

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enclosure. The rear-firing reflex port is pretty sizeable, too. In the crossover, low pass filters are used to optimise upper and lower midrange integration, handing over at 1.2kHz and 2.5kHz. Tangent claims a nominal 6ohm amplifier load and the power handling ceiling is a generous 200W (peak) given the high-ish 88dB sensitivity rating, while the quoted frequency range is 50Hz to 20kHz.

Sound quality

My larger listening room has turned into a temporary holding area for £500-£600 floorstanders of late, so Monitor Audio's Bronze 5 (HFC 402) and Tannoy's Mercury 7.4 (HFC 424) are usefully close at hand for reference. The rest of the cast consists of Musical Fidelity's muscular and musical KW250S CD player/receiver, a Project Debut Carbon turntable and Townshend Isolda DCT speaker cable.

The Bronze 5 and Mercury 7.4 represent two very different ways of doing the budget floostanding thing. The MA is precise, punchy, impressively transparent and tautly controlled. The Tannoy sounds bigger, bassier and more relaxed but softer and, rhythmically, a little loose. You'd think that between them there'd be something to tickle the fancy of most music lovers, but the Tangent suggests a third way.

It's not the airiest-sounding speaker in the world. Nor is it the most conspicuously detailed. At low-ish volumes, it sounds unremarkable, a perfectly capable provider of low distraction background music. And so it is. At low-ish volumes. But you don't have to tweak the volume knob by much to discover that its true talent is merely taking a breather. ▶

The rear-firing bass port is bigger than most



Q&A

Karsten Holst
MD, Tangent Audio



DV: There's no provision for the walnut plinth to be spiked to the floor. Would you say that the X6 is more lifestyle than hi-fi?

KH: Apart from the aesthetic benefit, the walnut plinth also acts to reduce cabinet resonance through to the floor. For hi-fi enthusiasts, we recommend the X6s are placed on concrete plinths for optimum audio performance. However, wooden floors (commonplace in Scandinavian homes) and carpeted flooring are still acceptable.

Will there be an active, Bluetooth-equipped version of the X6 available in the future?

The X6 BT version will be available in the UK from August this year. It will form a traditional 'master and slave' system with one of the speakers housing 2x 50W Class D amps. The speaker will boast a bandwidth from 20Hz to 20kHz and inputs include two analogue, two digital, one sub output and wireless aptX Bluetooth (version 4.2). The result will be a powerful speaker system fusing versatility with high-quality audio and lifestyle design.

The X6 competes in a crowded segment. How would you describe its unique selling point?

Like all models in Tangent's Spectrum Series, the X6 floorstanding speakers offer optimum audio performance and value for money. Its USP is the design... a high-quality and very durable satin finished cabinet with protective flush-fitting mesh grilles over the drivers and the walnut base plinths result in an effective combination of both hi-fi and lifestyle design.

IN SIGHT



- 1 25mm fabric dome tweeter
- 2 2x 130mm coated paper mid/bass drivers
- 3 Bass reflex port
- 4 Single speaker binding posts

And the transformation can't help but raise a sizeable smile.

There's no way not to notice the engagingly robust, solid and beautifully balanced way these self-effacingly slim towers go about their business when asked to show their mettle. Here's a presentation with body, brio and balls that also possesses crisp timing and the great good fortune of not sounding in the least unnaturally aggressive or edgy. That initial gain nudge soon becomes a decent push and the X6's sound swells and sings and simply becomes more enjoyably palpable and room filling.

Take London Grammar's latest, *Truth Is A Beautiful Thing* (p101). Via the Bronze 5, I'm drawn to a magnificently potent, reverb-heavy production that can nevertheless sound distinctly forward and hyped on occasion – the track *Non Believer* is a good example. Little wonder LG has become a hi-fi demo favourite. With the X6, the music and applied acoustic isn't so explicitly lit while Hannah Reid's vocal takes a step back from being almost in your face. It's a crucial adjustment that restores a sense of naturalness and perspective without squandering presence.

The X6 doesn't do 'artificial sheen'. Unless the recording is terrible and

'grainy and harsh' it fails to penetrate its benignly biased defences. I suspect a small amount of manipulated smoothness and warmth in the voicing is at work here, but the upshot is a high degree of listenability. The downside for some will be a slight shortfall of the inner detail and micro-dynamic nuances an album like jazz fusionist Jeff Lorber's *Step It Up* depends on for maximum enjoyment. Resolving vanishingly small details and acoustic cues with lightning speed isn't the X6's forte, but it does paint the larger musical picture with remarkable confidence and ease and no lack of power. Here there's an interesting comparison with the larger Tannoy Mercury 7.4, which has a similar largesse and reluctance to sweat the small stuff but can't match the Spectrum X6's focus and solidity or the delectably propulsive, articulate quality of its bass. And this despite the surprising omission of any means to spike the Tangent's plinth to the floor. In my listening room, the interface is plain old wood-on-carpet with a good deal of finger-push wobble rather than the tuning fork twang you get when a tower is sharply four-point coupled to the ground (see Q&A boxout, opposite).

Conclusion

So, to summarise, the Spectrum X6's strengths lie clearly with an over-arching smoothness and refinement supported by an appropriately natural tonal palette and a powerful, full-bodied presentation that images and times well but doesn't tie itself in knots trying to resolve the finest details. It isn't one for people that like to analyse every strand and layer of a recording, but its coherence and musicality shouldn't be underestimated. It's a speaker that, more often than not, is a real pleasure to listen to and doesn't just hold it together at higher volumes but really hits its stride ●

HOW IT COMPARES

Q Acoustic's 3050 (HFC 398) punches well beyond its weight and has a wide and superbly balanced span of attributes. That said, Monitor Audio's Bronze 5 (HFC 402) offers greater clarity, especially from the midband up, and Tannoy's Mercury 7.4 (HFC 424) delivers more scale and bass extension, at the expense of some precision and rhythmic security. The Spectrum X6 fails to match the 3050's handling of fine detail, but offers a similarly natural tonal balance and builds on that with a bolder, harder-hitting ride when the wick's turned up. I suspect that most will consider the Tangent prettier too.

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY



LIKE: Solid, powerful and musically coherent sound

VALUE FOR MONEY



DISLIKE: There are airier, more detailed rivals out there

BUILD QUALITY



WE SAY: Hugely likeable speaker that's easy to live with

EASE OF DRIVE



OVERALL

