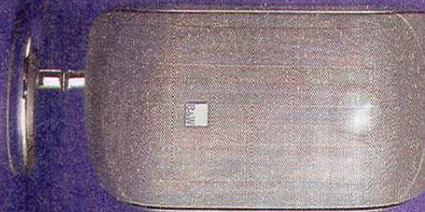
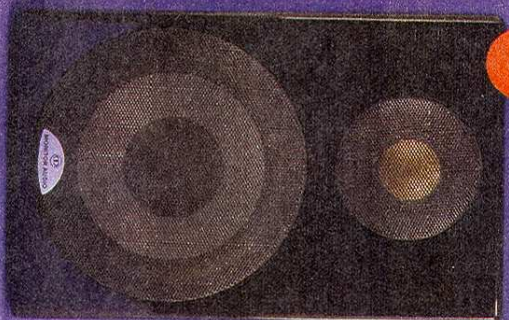


TAKE FIVE

STAYING IN TONIGHT? GOOD SURROUND SPEAKERS WILL TRANSFORM THE HOME-MOVIE EXPERIENCE



If you are spending £200 on an AV amplifier and

£200 on a DVD player, spend at least £400 on surround speakers, writes Stephen Ferns. Many people don't

care about sound, but you'll risk missing out on a significant proportion of the DVD movie-watching experience if you compromise. Small may be beautiful, but in this instance bigger is better. Film sound-records go to great lengths to create an 'as though-you-were-there' experience. We've pictured one satellite speaker from each: a 5:1 surround system usually has four satellites, one centre channel (5) and one subwoofer (1).

1 MISSION M-CUBE

The raison d'être of this system is to be small and unobtrusive. The subwoofer goes up to 250Hz to compensate for the satellites' inability to handle deeper bass frequencies. The consequence is that the overall experience is less involving than that of a system featuring larger satellites that handle a wider range of frequencies. It is not as lush or visceral as the Radius or B&W. As a compromise, for a small room, it does a great job. It has everything you will need, even coloured speaker wraps to match your decor.

£800; www.mission.co.uk, 0845 458 1122

2 MONITOR AUDIO RADIUS R90 AV12

Choice Recently voted 'best compact surround system' at the 2006 What Hi-Fi? awards, these would easily stand comparison with any conventional hi-fi speaker. The 500-watt subwoofer has won awards on its own and thumps out extremely well-controlled deep bass. The speakers' musical credentials mean they render soundtracks in a clear, 'believable' manner. The satellites can fit in any room and are sold separately, so you could easily upgrade.

£1,350; www.monitoraudio.co.uk, 01268 740580

3 Q ACOUSTICS 1010

Unbelievably good value for the money. A slightly harder sound than the Radius or Kef, the size and design might make them seem slightly obtrusive to some, but because these are compact versions of bona fide hi-fi speakers, the sound is rich and involving. They lose something by comparison with a couple of the set-ups reviewed here, but you could buy two 1010 systems and still have change for a better-quality DVD player. If you're not a style fiend, these would be a great first buy.

£499.60; www.qacoustics.co.uk, 01470 504444

4 KEF 'EGG' KHT3005

Surprisingly good for a style-orientated system. It sounds like a 'proper' surround system: competent and well-thought-out. The subwoofer has no internal cross-over, which has to be set via your AV amp, which can be tricky if you are not sure what to do. The adjustment dictates how the frequencies are shared between the five channels. During the opening battle scene in *Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World* it rendered cannon-fire splintering timber to particularly potent effect.

£1,000; www.kef.co.uk, 01903 221500

5 B&W MT-30

Beautifully made, but an over-elaborate pain to set up yourself. Bare wire connections are always fiddly. The PV-1 subwoofer was the pick of What Hi-Fi? for 2004-5, but is possibly the least user-friendly of all those on test. It stands on an opening in the base of the sphere inside which are all the controls, so hope you never have to adjust any of them. But the PV-1 is very, very capable and the whole system sounds wonderfully refined.

£1,575; www.bw-speakers.com, 01903 221500