



## Cambridge Audio SX-50 €199 pair

★★★★☆

**Cambridge Audio** has managed to pack great things into small packages of late in the form of its fine wireless speakers. Can it repeat the trick with these, its smallest, most affordable bookshelf model?

Living up to the company's 'sound first' principles, there's not much razzle-dazzle to be found in the design. The straight-edged MDF cabinets feel a little basic and the baffle is mostly occupied with the 25mm silk-dome tweeter and 135mm mid/bass driver.

### Traditional looks, fine sound

The SX-50s are dressed in a reasonable black or dark-walnut veneer. If you are familiar with the SX-60s standmounts (reviewed in our September 2013 issue) the SX-50s are much alike but about 12cm shorter, and with rear- instead of front-firing bass reflex ports to accompany the single speaker terminals.

The sparkle in these speakers, then, may not lie in their looks - but that's because it's jam-packed in the sound.

The SX-50s zip their way around music with gusto, revelling in a good amount of detail and clarity. Avicii's *Hey Brother* is delivered in high spirits without

losing composure as the bass-line kicks in. Their enthusiastic way with rhythms and a well-balanced poise helps to keep them entertaining album after album.

### Tight, integrated bass

A smooth midrange, sweet treble and a clean, tight bass define their tonal balance. Disjointed or loose bass is a fairly common downfall at this price; the SX-50s' fine integration bucks that trend.

Placing them 30cm or so from a rear wall gives best results. Stick them against a wall and their vocal clarity and wide soundstage is somewhat compromised, while they sound a little thin and airy further out in the open. The cabinets are 24cm deep so make sure you have enough room to house them properly.

Tune in to a more sorrowful track, such as *The Battle* from the *Gladiator* soundtrack, and enough emotion is thrust out to keep things interesting for the duration.

It's only when we match the SX-50s up against slightly more expensive rivals that imperfections start to surface. The Award-winning Q Acoustic 2020is - £35 more than the SX-50s - soar that much

further up the dynamic range in *Dream Is Collapsing* from the *Inception* soundtrack, and dig up more layers in Nina Simone's vocals in *Feeling Good*.

### Excellent value for money

If you can spend the difference, the extra ability the 2020is offer make them a highly attractive proposition. And that's what knocks the SX-50s down a star in our rating.

Nevertheless, without knowing their price we certainly wouldn't have placed the SX-50s in the lower half of the £100-200 bracket. They're brilliantly good value and a class act to follow.

For the second - and hopefully not last - time, Cambridge Audio's SX series runs away with our firm nod of approval.

### Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Exuberant sound; plenty of detail; tonally balanced; clear, direct vocals

**AGAINST** A touch fussy with placement, more ability is available at only a slightly higher price

**VERDICT** Sprightly SX-50s are a bargain - and a worthy addition to any room's furniture

They are traditional-looking, but the SX-50s offer up a sprightly, entertaining sound