



▶ **DETAILS**

PRODUCT
System Audio
Silverback 1

ORIGIN
Denmark

TYPE
Active wireless
speakers and hub

WEIGHT
5.5kg per speaker

DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
Speakers:
310 x 325 x 135mm
Hub:
41 x 170 x 100mm

FEATURES
● 25mm soft-dome
tweeter
● 140mm bass driver
● Mains-powered
80W amplifier in
each cabinet

DISTRIBUTOR
Karma-AV

WEBSITE
system-audio.com
karma-av.co.uk

input, HDMI ARC, three optical, one coaxial and two RCA phono inputs.

Also available is a System Audio Surround Hub, which allows the system to be part of a WiSA-enabled Dolby Atmos home cinema system with up to eight channels of 24-bit/96kHz audio.

The cabinets are available in a white satin or black satin finish and are primarily designed for hanging on the wall with a single fixing screw. They are supplied with some self-adhesive silicone feet that can be placed on the back of the speaker to allow air circulation between the wall and cabinet. It is also designed to stand on a shelf close to a wall. In this case, the self-adhesive silicone feet can be placed underneath. Inside each speaker is a specially designed 140mm bass driver and waveguided 25mm soft-dome tweeter.

Each cabinet contains a mains-powered 80W amplifier and a preamp that has wireless WiSA and line inputs. The WiSA receiver allows the speaker to be connected wirelessly to the stereo hub, surround hub or a similar WiSA transmitter. Each speaker requires a mains input connection and is supplied with a power lead that connects via a standard 'figure-of-eight' connector.

Before use, the speakers and the supplied remote control have to be paired with the Stereo Hub. This is a straightforward process and similar to that used for pairing Bluetooth devices. A smartphone is required for setup and must be connected to wi-fi with System Audio's SA Cockpit app installed. The app allows you to easily add speakers and hubs to the network, creating a multi-room system Sonos style, and even includes a room correction feature called 'Room Service'.

Sound quality

My first impression of the Silverback 1 is that the cabinets look attractive and are slim and elegant enough to blend well in a domestic setting. I kick off the listening tests with Judith Owen singing *Train Out Of Hollywood* from her jazz album *Lost And Found*, with American blues musician Keb Mo. Owen's voice is clear and situated out in front between the speakers, with the accompaniment behind her. The piano is really well reproduced

Sound system

Neville Roberts was so impressed with this wireless music system at the UK Hi-Fi Show *Live!* that he decided to find out more

System Audio was founded in 1984 by Ole Witthoft who had a musical background and wanted to design natural-sounding speakers that were compact, but with a big sound. As Witthoft put it, he wanted to create a speaker that reflected his fascination with the music as well as his interest in technology. He also wanted a design that functioned properly and was beautiful enough to deserve a place in a domestic setting. Witthoft says his approach to the design of his speakers is that quality should be in the sound it produces and its ability to be a natural piece of furniture in the living room. Consequently, the Silverback 1 is a

slim A4-sized active speaker designed for discreet wireless operation alongside the company's bijou 'Stereo Hub' WiSA transmitter and control centre. The system is intended for music lovers who desire a large and detailed soundstage without the physical in-room footprint associated with wired systems. Its designed to be capable of delivering room-filling wireless audio up to 24-bit/192kHz from a variety of sources.

The Stereo Hub and matching remote work together to provide wireless connections to devices via Roon Ready, Google Chromecast, Apple AirPlay 2, Bluetooth, DLNA UpNP and Spotify Connect. The hub also has a USB Audio 24-bit/192kHz



and the patting on the drums is authoritative and full. Most noticeably at the end of the track, you can hear the plucking of the individual strings when Mo is playing his guitar.

Staying on the jazz theme, but this time on a more classic tip in the form of Ben Webster playing *Over The Rainbow*, I am treated to a superb and refined performance. Although it is the first time that I have heard this particular track, I am very familiar

Bass notes are well extended, tight and punchy while treble is smooth and clear

with the sound of 'Big' Ben Webster as I have a copy-master tape of his 1967 album *Old Betsy* in my collection. As with his other recordings, *Over The Rainbow* features Webster's smooth and refined saxophone with his drum and piano accompaniment and, once again, I am struck by the very real reproduction of his music. The sax is well positioned within the soundstage in prominent position in front of the other instruments and has a suitably strong presence and authenticity.

Orchestral music is surprisingly powerful with a wide soundstage and very full sound. At times, it is difficult



HOW IT COMPARES

Finding a direct comparison is difficult as wireless hi-fi speakers of this quality at this price are either bookshelf, floorstanders or wall-mounted cabinets that are not wireless. For example, Klipsch's The Sevens is wireless and delivers 100W per channel from its built-in amplifier. However, it is 206 x 416 x 276mm, so will stand out quite a bit when mounted on a wall as it is twice as deep and more suitable for use as a bookshelf speaker.

to believe that I am listening to such a small pair of speakers. Bass notes are well extended, tight and punchy while treble is smooth and clear throughout, without any tendency to edge into harshness. Instrument imaging is very good and the Silverback 1 presents a wide and open soundstage across a good range of different musical genres.

Conclusion

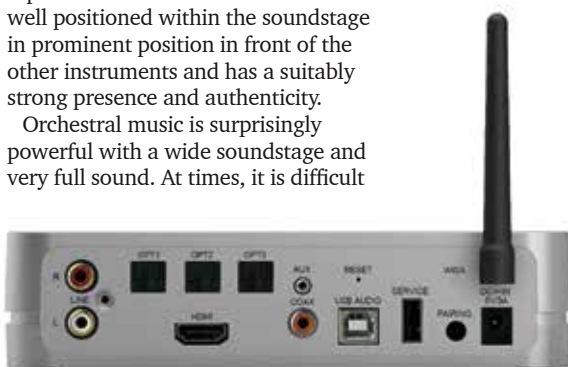
There is little to criticise about what is essentially a complete audio system with a good sound that won't put too much of a dent into your bank balance or space. As such, it is an ideal starter system for a student or someone beginning their hi-fi journey.

A great feature is how easily the Silverback 1 will unobtrusively fit into a sitting room or other domestic environment. As the cabinets can easily be positioned on a table, desk, shelf or wall, the system is essentially portable and yet is still able to deliver a proper hi-fi sound – making it ideal for those who are living in temporary accommodation.

Since the hub accepts so many inputs, from Bluetooth to a conventional line-in, it will allow you to experiment with source equipment and grow your setup to suit your requirements. You could start off by streaming from your phone, then connect a PC via the USB port and add other traditional sources such as a CD or SACD player, perhaps connected via one of the optical or coaxial inputs. You could even invest in one of the many standalone phono stages and add a record deck further down the line.



In summary, this is a versatile, complete audio solution that doesn't break the bank and really delivers great sound that won't take up too much space in your room ●



Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY ★★★★★ **LIKE:** Superb sound; elegant looks
VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★ **DISLIKE:** Nothing at the price
BUILD QUALITY ★★★★★ **WESAY:** An excellent-sounding system that's ideal for users with limited space
FEATURES ★★★★★

OVERALL

