

# Steinman Audio Labs

## HS 102 Five Speaker Pack

Over the past few issues of *Best Buys* you may have noticed reviews of a speaker brand called 'Pure Audio'. Its distributor, Aussie Hi Fi Traders, seems to have made a habit of distributing loudspeaker brands that offer amazing value for money. Well, this proved to be true, with another of its imports, Steinman Audio Labs, whose products have never previously graced our office.

### Equipment

The Steinman Audio Labs HS 102 speaker pack consists of the main speakers for a standard five channel surround system. There is a pair of front left and right floorstanders, a centre channel and two compact surround speakers.

The first thing we noticed was an aching back after we lugged in the cartons. Over the years it's often seemed that the relationship between the weight of a speaker and its cost is roughly linear: the higher the price, the heftier the build. These speakers break that nexus. According to our scales, the front speakers each weighed 21.75kg; but according to our old understanding, front speakers in this price range should only weigh 10kg, or even less. Even the centre channel was a solid 7.7kg and the small surrounds were 5.45kg each. In other words, you're getting a very solid unit for the money.

The floorstanders are three-way models, each with a 25mm dome tweeter, two 165mm drivers and a side-mounted 250mm 'subwoofer'. (We noted that the distributor took some pains to point out that these were not intended to replace a powered subwoofer.)

The cabinets stand just over a metre tall and are 210mm wide and 340mm deep. The very pale wood-grain veneer is highlighted by a textured black vinyl top and a piano gloss panel below the grilles. The leading edges of the baffle are bevelled.

The loudspeakers use a front-firing bass reflex port. The manufacturer rates the impedance at 8 ohms, the sensitivity at 88dB and the power handling at 250 watts RMS.

The centre channel is like the top section of the floor-standers; that is, it omits the large cabinet and the large driver. The twin



bass-reflex ports are at the rear. It measures 210mm tall, 495mm wide and 250mm deep.

The two surround speakers are small, each standing 325mm tall, 210mm wide and 240mm deep, and carry the tweeter and one 165mm bass/midrange driver. Their enclosures are sealed, rather than ported.

Both the centre and surround speakers follow the theme of pale wood side panels with a wrap-around textured black vinyl body.

All five speakers have gold plated binding posts, with biwiring allowed for on the front stereo pair.

### Performance

After fiddling with the positions, we decided that the best sound was with all speakers directed towards the listening position. We agreed pretty much with the sensitivity rating of 88dB for the front three, but the rear speakers needed about three decibels more for balance, probably due to the sealed enclosures.


The front speakers sounded somewhat louder than their sensitivity rating. The reason was a quite prominent mid- and upper-bass. Indeed, playing the male spoken voice through the stereo speakers alone produced a somewhat chesty result. This was not a problem in movies, though, since with the right settings virtually all the dialogue is piped through the centre channel, which appeared immune to this problem. We strongly recommend that you set your home theatre receiver to Dolby Pro-Logic for two channel and mono soundtracks to make sure the dialogue is directed to the centre channel.

As for music, these are truly rock speakers. The forward nature of the bass enhanced this sort of music, not to mention the fact that they seemed comfortable being played loud. Very

loud. We didn't have 250 watts available, but we did have an honest 140 watts per channel, and when we wound up the amplifier, the front floorstanders responded simply by getting louder. The character of the sound didn't change at all, nor was there any confusion or distortion added. If you want ear-blasting levels, they're readily available.

The stereo imaging was a little rudimentary, largely because subtlety was washed out by the bass. In surround mode, though, they convincingly steered the sound to the appropriate corner of the room.

### Conclusion

We wouldn't recommend these speakers for listeners seeking finesse and delicacy in classical music or jazz. But if your tastes run more towards the purpose for which this equipment has clearly been designed — movies and modern music — we wouldn't hesitate to recommend an audition. These loudspeakers appear to be bullet-proof. 

Steinman Audio Labs HS 102 Five Speaker Pack	
Price	\$1499
Warranty	Three years
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excellent value for money</li> <li>• Bullet-proof construction</li> <li>• Can go wonderfully loud</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forward bass</li> <li>• Not really suitable for classical music</li> </ul>
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