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Wharfedale Evo 4.4 5.1 pack review

A stylish surround system that's easy on the ears *Tested at £2799 / \$5095 / AU\$8067*

★★★★★ By [What Hi-Fi?](#) published

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(Image: © Future)

What Hi-Fi? Verdict ★★★★★

Despite its premium credentials, this is a great value system for impressive and engaging home cinema sound

Pros

- + Relaxed but dynamic sound
- + Extremely natural vocals
- + Rhythmically astute

Cons

- Huge centre speaker

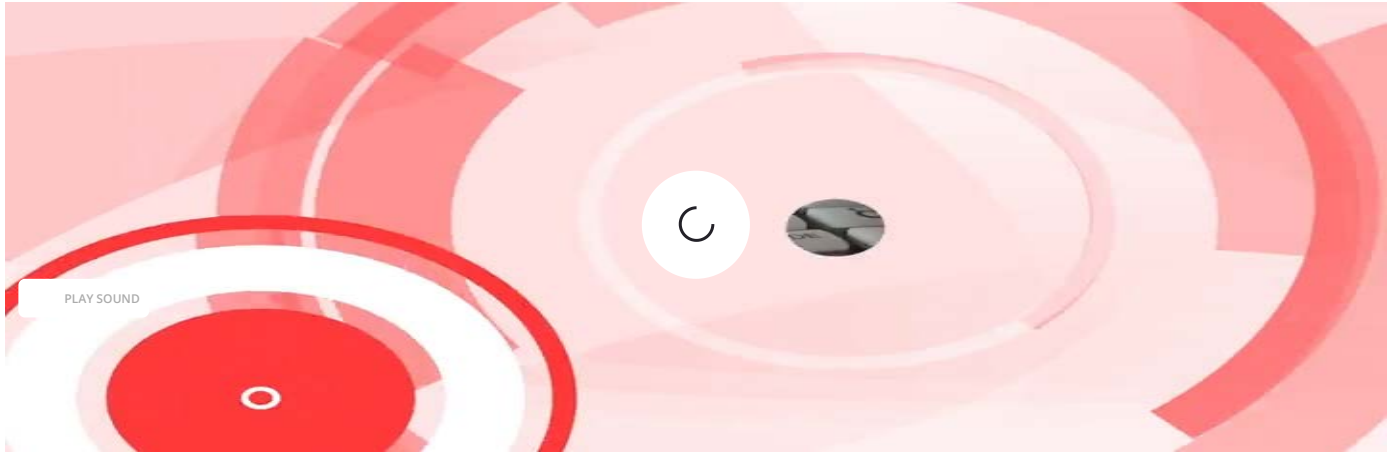
From affordable accessibility to mid-range dependability to high-end grandeur, it's usually pretty obvious where a speaker range sits within a brand's carefully constructed product hierarchy. However, when it comes to ranking value, rather than just cost, that can sometimes be harder to determine, particularly when it comes to the considerable outlay that's involved in purchasing a full 5.1 home cinema package.

Wharfedale's Evo series occupies an unenviable position in the midst of the company's speaker offering, flanked on one side by the wildly successful budget [Diamond range](#), on the other by the superb flagship [Elysians](#) which, despite their premium price, still represent an excellent return in terms of sound per pound.

But it would be wrong to presume that Evo is the overlooked middle child of this overachieving speaker family. Developed concurrently with Elysian, Evo is packed with technology that uses the same concepts as its bigger sibling, bringing a high-minded approach that's anything but middling to this refined but relaxed speaker package.

...no size options available for each type. The flagship Evo 4.4 and smaller but similarly specced Evo 4.3 floorstanders boast a three-way design, as does the Evo 4.2 bookshelf speaker, while the ultra-compact Evo 4.1 is a two-way standmount speaker. Meanwhile, there's the sizeable three-way Evo 4.C and the two-way Evo 4.CS for a centre channel.

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Price



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(Image credit: Future)

For this review, we have a system comprising the Evo 4.4 floorstanders (£1199 / \$1998 / AU\$3699), the Evo 4.2 bookshelf speakers (£649 / \$1199 / AU\$ 1620) and the Evo 4.C centre channel (£499 / \$899 / AU\$1499), all partnered with the SW-12 sub (£496 / \$999 / AU\$1249). In the UK, this set-up is known as the Evo 4.4 5.1 pack and is available at a bundle price of £2799, saving £44 against buying the separates.

A similar system from the Elysian range would start at £13,493 / \$19,985 / AU\$32,000 without the sub. Given that it shares many of its engineering principles with Evo, it certainly makes the latter an exciting prospect.

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Wharfedale Evo 4.4

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Build



(Image credit: Future)

This symbiosis is immediately evident from the inclusion of Air Motion Transformer tweeters across all the models in the Evo series, a technology usually found in pricier products.

Instead of a cone or dome-shaped driver, AMTs use a light, pleated diaphragm with electrical circuit traces within a magnetic field that



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, domed midrange driver coated with a
response, from 800Hz to 5kHz, and sits in
id, which Wharfedale says helps to reduce

WHARFEDALE EVO 4.4 5.1 PACK TECH SPECS



(Image credit: Future)

Evo 4.4

Type three-way, bass reflex

Max power 200W

Sensitivity 89dB

Nominal Impedance 8 ohms

Minimum Impedance 4.3 ohms

Frequency response 44Hz to 22kHz

Dimensions (hwd) 106 x 25 x 45cm

Weight 25.6kg (each)

Evo 4.2

Type three-way, bass reflex

Max power 120W

Sensitivity 87dB

Nominal Impedance 8ohms

Minimum Impedance 4 ohms

Frequency response 54Hz to 22kHz

Dimensions (hwd) 46 x 25 x 35 cm

Weight 13.4kg (each)

Evo 4.C

Type three-way, bass reflex

Max power 120W

Sensitivity 90dB

Nominal Impedance 8 ohms

Minimum Impedance 4.3 ohms

Frequency response 48Hz to 22kHz

Dimensions (hwd) 25 x 75 x 35cm

Weight 15.8kg

SW12 subwoofer

Amplifier output 300W

Sensitivity 118dB



Both the Evo 4.4 and Evo 4.C have two 0.5-inch tweeter woofers (the Evo 4.2s have one) with added bass support from two ports. While the centre channel has traditional rear ports, the floorstanders and the bookshelf speakers benefit from Wharfedale's tongue-twisting Slot Loaded Profiled Port (SLPP) technology. Also found in the Elysians, SLPP is claimed to better match the acoustic output of the port to the room, so reducing distortion and improving efficiency.

The Evo range is elegantly designed with bowed cabinet sides and rounded corners and comes in three smart wood grain finishes – black, white and walnut. However, no amount of curved edges can skirt around the fact that these are relatively large speakers, and we're not just referring to the front pair. In fact, the depth of the Evo 4.2 surrounds and the frankly colossal size of the Evo 4.C will make this system tricky to house for anyone who doesn't have the luxury of a dedicated home cinema room. Of course, there are smaller options available, but having not tested them, we can't vouch for how well they would integrate as a system.

Brushed metal spikes sit neatly within the plinths of the Evo 4.4s and Evo 4.2s, and all the speakers feature two sets of terminals for bi-wiring, with brushed metal straps for non-bi-wired set-ups.

Compared to the Evo 4.C, the SW-12 sub with a 12-inch front-facing driver looks relatively diminutive, despite being the medium option from the three-strong SW range. Available in black or white wood finishes with a high gloss baffle and chrome drive surround, it is stylistically more suggestive of the Diamond range. However, its smart appearance and excellent performance mean we aren't too bothered by its slight visual variation.

With a powerful low end across the entire system, we find it best to place the speakers around 1m away from the walls of our test room. However, placement is a relatively painless affair, with the wide, even dispersion of the Evos allowing for variation in layout.

There's a nominal impedance of 8 ohms across the range and a lowest minimum impedance of 4 ohms, meaning this system isn't likely to throw up any issues for a price-compatible AVR. For this test, we've paired it with our 2021 Award-winning [Denon AVC-X6700H](#) amplifier, priced at £2299 / \$2499 / AU\$6190, with the [Pioneer UDP-LX500 UHD](#) 4K Blu-ray player as our source.

Sound



(Image credit: Future)

It's striking that when we start playing *Dune* in 5.1 on the Evo 4.4 surround system, it immediately prompts us to question whether there is any need for [Dolby Atmos](#). Of course, there is, but it's a great reminder that if you have quality speakers capable of detailed precision and fluid transparency, you don't need to go all-in on rears and height channels to have a seriously immersive home system.

In a post-apocalyptic desert beset by giant worms and dubious farming practices there's an authenticity and ease to the soundscape as it's rendered by the Evos, making this unhurried sci-fi saga a touch more captivating than when heard on a lesser system. ✕

Watching *Ready Player One*, we're again impressed that every voice, from the slightly flat opening narration to Aech's pitch-shifted drawl, retain their expressiveness, while the integration across the system as traffic zips all around us feels thrillingly seamless, as does King Kong's swinging rampage. When things get busy the spaciousness of the Evo 4.4 system is obvious, with every sound given adequate separation and space. Switching over to the baseline test scenes in *Blade Runner 2049* we become more aware of the finer subtle details that the system picks out, from the gradual building dynamic intensity to the slight breath before the interrogator relents in his questioning.

We already know that the Evo 4.4s are excellent musical performers, but listening on a full surround system reiterates their prowess. Streaming Fiona Apple's *Under The Table*, as the swaggering plucked bass strings begin to slap with increasing intensity against the instrument's fingerboard, the resulting vibration can often sound harsh and reduced to the initial transient. But here the entire envelope of the decaying vibration is effortlessly audible amongst the layered canonical vocals.

Switching to John Batiste and Cory Wong's extensive improvisation *Meditation*, where the space around the notes is almost as vital as the notes themselves, the Evos again do a wonderful job illuminating the long ambient reverb tails of guitar and piano as they wrap around each other.

More ornate tracks are also a pleasure to listen to. Streaming *Balls* by Sparks, the Evos demonstrate their rhythmic astuteness with a cohesive, articulate sound that's entertaining and captivating at both loud and quiet volumes.

Verdict



(Image credit: Future)

The Evo 4.4 5.1 pack is a powerful but detailed system that never sounds like it's having to work too hard. Voices are projected with transparency and are full of character, and there's an ease and spaciousness to the speakers' performance that makes this a set-up that's immensely enjoyable to listen to for long periods of time.

If you're thinking about upgrading your home cinema, this is a system well worth considering. Undoubtedly its size means it won't be a practical choice for many people, but packed as it is with sophisticated speaker technology, we think the Evo 4.4 5.1 system represents superb value for money.

SCORES

- Sound 5
- Build 5
- Compatibility 5