

WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION

GROUP TEST WINNER

Cambridge Audio Azur 540C V2.0
★★★★★ €459

Cambridge Audio Azur 540A V2.0
★★★★★ €459

Mordaunt-Short Avant 902i
★★★★★ €198



Als de Mordaunt Short luidspreker niet verkrijgbaar zou zijn bij uw dealer kunnen de Cambridge Audio S30 en Sendor S3e een uitstekend alternatief vormen (de S3e is voortgekomen uit de beroemde BC-serie BBC monitorluidsprekers...

Cambridge/Mordaunt-Short

★★★★★

€1119

on paper, this this looks a pretty sure bet. The CD player is a best-in-class Award-winner, while the speakers are also among our favourites. And while it's the first time we've seen the V2.0 amp, its predecessor was a class-leader, so we have high hopes.

While it's fairly clear the build of this system isn't of the same quality as the more expensive kit here – the amp isn't heavier than a small child, for starters – Cambridge Audio's distinctive styling (available in silver or black) is smart, and the buttons user-friendly. It's the same story with the solid remote control.

Stereo amplifiers aren't typically feature-heavy, but the 540A V2.0 boasts a notable addition in the form of being 'Incognito Ready'. Incognito is Cambridge Audio's multiroom system, which means this amp

for

Build and design are impressive: the electronics, especially, belie the price; detailed, involving, exciting listen; fine timing

against

No obvious weaknesses at this price, though the amplifier and player are capable of even more

verdict

A fine budget system, and one that we would happily listen to at length, which can't be bad

is capable of driving music in up to three different 'zones'.

Now you might think this system looks rather stranded in this test in terms of price, but it's anything but when it comes to performance – it's everything we want for in a budget hi-fi system, and then some more.

Listening to Bob Dylan's *Spirit on the Water*, we're happily tapping our feet and enjoying the track. Unlike many budget systems,

“This is just a superb all-round hi-fi system, and unbeatable value”

where you're aware of limitations or flaws, everything seems to be present and correct. The electronics help to dredge up plenty of detail, revealing all the necessary gravel and grit in Dylan's delivery.

Like the best comedy, timing is crucial, and this system times like a metronome, ensuring a musical, involving listen that has no trouble holding your attention.

A spin of Arrested Development's *Inner City* illustrates this system's rhythmic ability with aplomb.

The size of the speakers makes for a system that'll suit most rooms – though those speakers sound best away from walls.

a system to suit most rooms

This is simply a superb all-round hi-fi package, which in terms of absolute performance-per-pound could well hold its own against anything we can muster at any price. However, don't be fooled, this remains at heart a budget system, and many can do it better, but the components – especially the electronics – truly punch well above their weight.

instant upgrade

there really is little to fault here, but if you do want to upgrade, the Cambridge Audio electronics are capable of driving even better speakers. We tried various pairs, but the best fit we found was the B&W dm602 (€518 pair). they offer an improved sense of scale, together with a more emotive, realistic overall sound.



Cambridge Audio Azur 540C v.20 outputs phono, Coaxial digital, optical digital, memory Yes finishes 2

Cambridge Audio Azur 540A v2.0 power output 50w Line-Level inputs 5 tape Loops 2 preamp out speaker s 2 tone controls 2 headphone Yes remote Yes finishes 2

mordaunt-short Avant 902i standmounts sensitivity 89dB impedance 8 ohms power-handling 100w Biwireable Yes dimensions 29 x 17 x 27cm weight 3kg