

Labtec LCS-2612

The LCS-2612's small satellites have a rather neat, adjustable bracket that can be used to clip them to either side of the monitor, but this does nothing to alleviate interference caused by their less-than-perfect magnetic shielding.

All controls are on the sub-woofer, which is slim enough to sit on a desk and, although the 'spatialiser' control has little effect on output, the mute button is very handy. The sound quality is good and, while there's no shortage of bass, it's on the loose side.

£139.95 (including VAT)
Labtec: 01252 890585

Reveal Theatra RSS160

Not the most stylish speakers around, but neither are they the most expensive. The wedge-shaped remote control is disappointingly linked by cable, which restricts speaker placement, but at least they can be kept off the desk. Magnetic shielding is topnotch, but sound quality is nothing special. Ideal for game-players and occasional midi-meisters.

£99.99 (including VAT)
Reveal: 0181 845 7400

Sony SRS-PC300D

The two small satellites are designed to be fixed to each side of your monitor, but the adhesive pads that effect this make them a semi-permanent addition. The small sub-woofer carries the controls so it has to be kept to hand, but good magnetic shielding makes it a worry-free addition to a desktop. Sound is clear with no harsh edges, but bass lacks presence.

£163.33 (including VAT)
Sony: 01932 816615

Yamaha YST-M10

The slim and curvy shape of the YST-M10s may be aesthetically pleasing, but their effect on the monitor isn't. Poor magnetic shielding produces an on-screen re-enactment of the bridge of the USS Enterprise under heavy fire, such is the amount of wobble. This is a pity as they're cheap and the sound is rather good, with tight bass and realistic presence.

£69 (including VAT)
Et Cetera: 01706 228039

Logic 3 Screenbeat SB300

The top-of-the-range SB300s have nifty two-part satellites that can be independently positioned for an effective stereo image. The sub-woofer is large, but its monopoly on the controls means that it can't be placed too far out of the way. The sound is pleasantly open and clear with ample bass.

£149.99 (including VAT)
Spectravideo: 0181 902 2211

Logic 3 Screenbeat 25

The second-smallest speakers in Logic 3's range, the Screenbeat 25s look and feel rather cheap – which of course they are. However, there's no skimping on magnetic shielding, and sound, though hardly hi-fi, is still distinctly easy on the ears. Certainly speakers for anyone working on a budget.

£29.99 (including VAT)
Spectravideo: 0181 902 2211

JPW Powered Monitor

The size and styling of JPW's Powered Monitors makes them look a little out of place on a typical desktop but, as their magnetic shielding is not quite perfect, they're better off on a shelf anyway. The hi-fi origin is clearly apparent in use – bass is tight and punchy and there's no distortion, even at high volumes. Sound quality is spot-on and the JPW-powered monitors are ideal all-rounders.

£129.99 (including VAT)
JPW: 01752 607000

Speakers' corner

You've sorted out the sound card but, to do it justice, you'll need a decent set of speakers. We sample the quality of sound emanating from eleven different speaker systems

Altec Lansing ACS 53

The controls for the ACS 53s are on the small satellite speakers, which is fortunate as it means the ugly breeze block of a sub-woofer can be hidden out of sight. Overall sound quality is good, but the bass from the sub-woofer is rather woolly. The satellites are well shielded, making positioning next to the monitor interference-free.

£175 (including VAT)
Altec Lansing: 01763 247316

Bose Mediamate

The Bose Mediamates are expensive, but at least they look it. Small and stylish, the speakers are angled upwards, which means that when you sit in front of both them and your monitor, you're in a perfect listening position. Bass is impressive for such small speakers, but it's more thump than punch. Left-right balance was also a little off on our units, but there are no controls to compensate for this.

£250 (including VAT)
Bose: 01795 475341

Bose Acoustimass

Much more expensive than their siblings, the Acoustimass system is really intended for professional use.

The satellites are tiny – about the size of a Rubik cube. Their magnetic shielding isn't great, but positioning them well away from the monitor is no problem as they have no controls and plenty of volume. The sub-woofer is a monster but, since it houses the volume and tone dials, it can't be shoved too far away. The sound is big, but bass is on the boomy side.

£750 (including VAT)
Bose: 01795 475341

Canon SV-15A



The stylish pair of Canon SV-15As make an attractive addition to any desktop, and their excellent magnetic shielding makes placement next to a monitor no problem. Alternatively, they can be hung on the wall or even upside-down on the ceiling. Wherever they are, they sound good – clear and well-balanced with punchy bass.

£179 (including VAT)
Canon: 0121 680 8062

Speakers compared

Make and model	Price (incl VAT)	Power output (RMS)	Headphone socket	Sound quality	Value for money
Altec Lansing ACS-53	£175	12 watts	○	4	4
Bose Mediamate	£250	60 watts	●	4	3
Bose Acoustimass	£750	90 watts	○	4	3
Canon SV-15A	£179	30 watts	○	5	4
JPW Powered Monitor	£129.99	8 watts	○	5	5
Labtec LCS-2612	£139.95	20 watts	●	4	4
Logic 3 Screenbeat 25	£29.99	n/a	●	3	5
Logic 3 Screenbeat SB300	£149.99	n/a	●	4	4
Reveal Theatra RSS160	£99.99	10 watts	○	4	4
Sony SRS-PC300D	£163.33	15 watts	●	4	4
Yamaha YST-M10	£69	10 watts	○	4	4

NOTES: ● = Yes ○ = No