

COVER FEATURE



MK Sound 750 THX Series

Great sound made simple



If you're an *AV Magazine* regular, you'll already be aware of MK Sound's THX-certified loudspeaker products. After all, the brand (which used to be known as Miller & Kreisel, or M&K) has been around for decades, even if the 'new', Danish-owned MK Sound has taken over from the US original.

to reach beyond its natural territory. And if it sticks to its low-frequency role, it can also be located where it sounds best in a room.

With the sub taking proper care of the low frequencies, the satellites employed for front and centre channel duties can be compact, which makes them easier to position, and less prone to room-related

The MK design philosophy stipulates that the LCR monitors are not ported, but employ a sealed cabinet instead. Again, this ensures a more accurate tonal rendition and a greater resilience to acoustic interaction with the room, therefore allowing positioning close to side and rear walls if necessary.

Anyone familiar with the THX home

MK Sound has been in the audio game for long enough to understand what makes for great sound. The US company was instrumental in popularising the benefits of the THX standard, and the sonic and technical excellence of its products are widely acknowledged in the professional audio arena. The 750 THX Series provides a convincing demonstration of the reasons behind MK Sound's hallowed reputation.



Today, MK Sound employs the same design principles that made M&K products the darling of the music and movie soundtrack recording industry. The drive units, previously sourced from Vifa, are now produced to MK Sound's specifications by Peerless, while the speakers themselves are assembled in China, simply because the combination of cost and quality is impossible to match anywhere else.

So much for the history stuff. Much more important in the here and now is the MK Sound 750 THX surround sound speaker system. It offers a 5.1 configuration comprising identical front left, front right and centre speakers, together with a pair of tripole surrounds, and a generously proportioned subwoofer.

Without getting embroiled in technicalities, MK Sound believes in leaving those visceral, window-rattling bass frequencies to its active subwoofers, while it relies on compact, frequency-focussed satellites to look after the midrange and trebles.

Think about it: the subwoofer can be configured to deliver deep, forceful and authoritative bass and sub-bass sonics without being compromised by the need

acoustic anomalies. Their narrower frequency band responsibilities also make them easier to drive.

In addition, the smaller form factor of these satellites reduces effective baffle size, which translates into more accurate and phase-coherent projection, a wider soundstage, and ensures that the speakers are less prone to colouration.



theatre standards will already have noted the compatibility between the MK Sound design approach, and the THX standard. In fact, M&K was closely involved with the development and evolving THX standards, and its products continue to be THX-certified.

It's also true that a long list of recording studios and movie production facilities employ MK's professional gear for monitoring and mix-down purposes, and the brand's movie credits include benchmarks such as *Star Wars* and *The Lord Of The Rings*.

It stands to reason that a surround sound speaker system designed to meet THX requirements will be in a far better position to recreate a THX-compliant surround sound mix — especially if the same brand's loudspeakers were also used for mastering the soundtracks.

The MK Sound 750 THX surround sound speaker system is THX Select-certified, a THX standard identical in technical specification to THX Ultra, but designed for the smaller spaces more typical of home-based theatre applications.

THX is adamant that its Select parameters are in no way sonically inferior to the even more stringent THX Ultra



standard, but that its specifications simply recognise that many home users will be operating their systems in more compact rooms.

The 750 THX system's three front speakers follow a so-called LCR design approach, which essentially means that the three speakers – front left, centre and front right – are identical for all intents and purposes. This not only allows a homogenous tonal character across the entire front stage, but the matched voicing ensures superior front-channel integration and a potentially seamless delivery.

The technical highlights of the LCR-750THX speakers employed for the front three channels include MK's phase-focussed crossover design, which operates in conjunction with an angled tweeter.

According to MK, the crossover was created after close analysis of the speaker's response in the time as well as the frequency domains, in both vertical and horizontal axes, with the objective of achieving a flat on-axis and off-axis response. The result is a crossover that

allows optimised driver response and dispersion characteristics.

With two mid/bass drivers, both power delivery and efficiency are enhanced to the overall benefit of dynamic range, despite the compact dimensions of the enclosures. The tweeter is mounted at a 4.7 degree inward facing angle as part of the MK system's overall emphasis on optimised imaging on and off-axis.

The centre channel version of the LCR-750THX satellites is essentially identical in specification and execution, but has been optimised for the horizontal location typically employed in home cinemas.

With the three drive units in the centre-channel being identical to those in the front main satellites, coherent voicing and an evenly integrated sound field across the entire front soundstage is ensured, while the dynamic range also promises the clear projection of all-important dialogue.

The surround duties in the 750 THX system are performed by a pair of Surr 55 Tripoles – surprisingly compact units designed to be located on the wall to each

side of and above the listening position.

The surrounds are timbre-matched to the front speakers, and combine a pair of 75 mm paper-coned drivers in a dipole configuration, with a direct-firing 133 mm mid/bass unit, and a 25 mm soft-dome tweeter. The tripole design allows a diffuse sound field that assists in recreating space and ambience, while also retaining the trademark MK emphasis on accuracy and clarity.

The final component of the 750 THX system is the SB 1250 THX subwoofer. Generously proportioned without being overly intrusive, the MK sub's enclosure is home to a long-throw 300 mm paper cone driver, linked to a power amp rated at a continuous 250 watts.

The sub offers versatile system connection options, including stereo high-level (speaker) inputs and outputs, as well as line-level stereo/mono line-level RCA inputs and outputs, the latter allowing the daisy-chaining of more than one sub if required.

In the interests of effective subwoofer integration, the SB1250 provides a phase

VITAL STATS

control steplessly variable between 0 and 180 degrees, while the low-pass filter can also be seamlessly set between 40 and 200 Hz – or bypassed completely in systems where the low-pass filtering is handled by the receiver or processor. A level control allows further fine-tuning.

In cosmetic terms, the 750-THX system is best described as functional: the enclosures are wrapped in unobtrusive black vinyl, and the grilles are clip-on, black anodised metal. Even the gold MK logos are optional. But that said, the assembly quality is top notch, and the overall execution admirable.

Having installed the MKs in the *AV Magazine* listening room, I spent an evening setting up and fine-tuning the system, followed by an extended settling in period of around 100 hours before settling in for a proper listen.

I used our NAD T777 reference receiver's Audyssey set-up procedure for an initial calibration, but then fine-tuned the receiver's set-up to reflect the THX-recommended 80 Hz high-pass filter point for the main channels, and a 80 Hz low-pass filter point for the subwoofer.

Add some fettling with the individual channel levels, and we were almost raring to go. The sub sounded comfortable and incisive enough in the right front corner of the listening studio, albeit with the phase control turned all the way to the 180 degree mark.

I started off with Led Zeppelin's blockbuster reunion concert, *Celebration Day* (Atlantic BluRay), and was instantly transported into the very heart of London's O2 theatre, with the electricity almost tangible and the energy of the band equally enthralling.

The recording can suffer from a certain amount of bite, especially when listened to on a more revealing system, and that was certainly the case here, too, but the MK speaker system didn't allow the slight edge in the upper mids and trebles to detract from the strutting intensity of the music.

There is an authenticity to this performance that is often overlooked in the euphoria of its historical significance, but

LCR-750THX FRONT SPEAKERS

Enclosure type	Sealed, infinite baffle
Drive units	1x 25 mm soft-dome tweeter, 2x 133 mm polypropylene cone mid/bass drivers
Impedance	4 ohms nominal
Sensitivity	90.5 dB
Frequency response	80 Hz - 20 kHz (± 3 dB)
Power handling	150 watts RMS
Dimensions (HxWxD)	408 x 178 x 203 mm
Weight	6.9 kg

LCR-750THX-C CENTRE CHANNEL SPEAKER

Enclosure type	Sealed, infinite baffle
Drive units	1x 25 mm soft-dome tweeter, 2x 133 mm polypropylene cone mid/bass drivers, horizontally configured
Impedance	4 ohms nominal
Sensitivity	90.5 dB
Frequency response	80 Hz - 20 kHz (± 3 dB)
Power handling	150 watts RMS
Dimensions (HxWxD)	178 X 408 x 203 mm
Weight	6.9 kg

SUR 55T TRIPOLE SURROUND SPEAKER

Enclosure type	Sealed, infinite baffle
Drive units	1x 25 mm soft-dome tweeter, x 133 mm polypropylene cone mid/bass driver, 2x 76 mm coated paper cone drivers, side-mounted.
Impedance	4 ohms nominal
Sensitivity	85 dB
Frequency response	87 Hz - 20 kHz (± 3 dB)
Power handling	100 watts RMS
Dimensions (HxWxD)	259 X 178 x 221 mm
Weight	4.7 kg

SB 1250THX SUBWOOFER

Enclosure type	Sealed, active
Drive units	1x 300 mm treated paper cone woofer, magnetically shielded
Impedance	4 ohms nominal
Frequency response	18 - 200 Hz, low-pass filter variable between 40 and 200 Hz.
Power output	250 watts RMS
Dimensions (HxWxD)	457 x 387 x 584 mm
Weight	20.4 kg

PRICE.....R34 988

VERDICT

Seamless, spacious and all-enveloping staging with smooth tonality and loads of detail ensure an engrossing cinematic experience. Solid bass adds vital authority and foundation. Pretty good with music, too!

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OUR RATING: 81 / 100





the way Plant, Page and Jones command centre stage with a quiet confidence, and an almost bemused realisation that they still have what it takes, makes their performances all the more memorable.

Despite their unassuming presence, the MK speakers had no trouble recreating both the space and the verve of these performances. The staging was magnanimous, easily creating the illusion of being in the large, filled-to-the-brim theatre, while also providing an array of believable ambient clues to heighten the overall sense of realism.

Of particular note was the balance of the system – tonally, the low frequencies were not only omnipresent and muscular, but they were also delivered with the right level of fortitude and impetus to create a taut and composed foundation.

The tonal progression into the midband and treble ranges was smooth and seamless, with no noticeable crossover point between the sub and the satellites. The mids were clean and sinewy, with no flab or unnatural roll-off, while the trebles were bright and breezy, but without any edge or bite to the delivery.

I enjoyed the way the full impact and scale of the performance was emphatically brought to the fore, despite the unassuming presence of the MK speakers. The system always sounded larger and more energetic than the enclosures would suggest, while also providing a detailed and believable insight into the music.

By comparison, Jeff Beck's riveting performance in a crowded Ronnie Scott's sounds musically dense and rich, with his wailing guitar soaring above the articulate bass of Tal Wilkenfeld, Jason Rebello's inventive keyboards, and the compelling percussion of Vinnie Colaiuta. This is a superb set, and the MK system captured the essence and the atmosphere with spellbinding realism.

Turning to movies, I enjoy the storytelling, the cinematography and the engrossing soundtrack of *Batman Begins*. It's a stern challenge for a home cinema

Associated Equipment

NAD T777 AV receiver
Oppo BDP-103EU universal player
Sony Bravia 40-inch LCD television
Atlantic Technology surround sound speakers
Kimber, StraightWire and XLO cabling

Software

Led Zeppelin - Celebration Day (Atlantic Blu-ray)
Jeff Beck - Performing This Week ... Live At Ronnie Scott's (Eagle Rock Blu-Ray)
Batman Begins (Warner Blu-ray)
Hugo (Warner Blu-Ray)
Inception (Warner Blue-ray)

system, because of the substantial dynamic swings, and the taxing special effects.

Again, I was taken aback by the MK system's talent for scale and space – the soundscapes were massive and life-like, with an almost tactile believability, while the tonal spread was linear and open, underscored by a powerful and muscular bass. Trebles were smooth and accessible with a natural timbre, crowned by lucid, distinct tops.

Inter-channel integration was particularly satisfying, allowing effects to be steered from all angles with a precision that added to the intensity and believability of the sound. Vital also here was the transparency of the speakers – they managed to remain invisible as point sources, adding further realism.

As is always the case with multichannel loudspeaker systems, spending sufficient time fine-tuning speaker location and subwoofer level is vital to achieving a smoothly rendered soundstage and seamless integration.

The MK 750 THX 5.1 speaker package may look understated and unassuming, but in practice it always sounds bigger and more authoritative than expected. The forcefulness and the pace of the bass, the detailed and open midrange,

and the fine and revealing trebles are fused into an all-enveloping sound that makes movies, and the music, come alive.

That this system is also able to project a wide and inviting soundstage with powerful dimensionality and a pervading sense of accuracy adds to its overall appeal, while its off-axis linearity makes for a wider and more inviting sweet spot that will have the entire family nailed to their seats.

Bravo, MK Sound! Bravo!

Deon Schoeman

