Steve Withers reckons this more affordable M&K package sounds familiar. And that’s a good thing

Pro sound, consumer price tag

In an ideal world you’d want to experience movies with the same speakers used to craft their soundtracks. M&K Sound has been making professional studio monitors for decades, and its S150 is about as iconic as you can get. But what if you fancy a similar level of performance from a speaker that’s a bit cheaper and a bit more... normal looking?

This particular question is no longer hypothetical thanks to M&K Sound’s recently upgraded 750 Series. The range represents an entry-level option within the company’s home cinema audio lineup, integrating innovations and high-performance technologies first introduced in the S150, and presenting them in a speaker with a more conventional driver layout, traditional cabinet design and acceptable ticket price.

Sensibly, the 750 Series employs a similar logic to studio monitors, keeping the left, centre and right speakers identical. Well, almost. The LCR750 (£1,000 per pair) is used for left and right channels, while the LCR750C (£500) is a dedicated centre speaker. The only difference is the latter is designed to be used horizontally rather than vertically, with an appropriately reorientated grille logo and binding posts.

The speakers each have 1in soft fabric dome tweeters and 5.25in stiffened fibreglass cone woofers, as do the S150s. However, instead of the latter’s funky three-tweeter-plus-two-woofer configuration, you get a more familiar tweeter-at-the-top-and-two-woofers-underneath layout. The HF drivers are given an ‘integrated’ wave guide and shallow horn load to boost dispersion characteristics. Aluminium rings, meanwhile, aim to kill distortion at high SPL levels.

Imaging both on- and off-axis is, says M&K, improved. And that’s a good thing.

We’re surrounded!

To complement the front three channels in this £3,700 5.1 system is M&K Sound’s more compact SUR55T tripole speaker (£1,095 per pair), which is designed to match the timbre of its siblings while providing a more diffuse surround presence. It uses the same front-mounted tweeter and woofer, but adds two 3in mid-tweeters – one on either side in a dipole orientation – to combine pin-point accuracy with an enveloping soundfield.

The SUR55T also has the same integrated wave guide, aluminium rings and high-frequency prism system, along with a curved metal grille. As with the LCR750 speakers, the left and right units are identified as such.

The original 750 Series was the first speaker to be certified THX Select more than 20 years ago, and these acoustically upgraded versions continue that tradition.

The specs of the speakers are largely uniform in terms of performance, with the LCR750/C delivering a claimed frequency response of 80Hz to 20kHz and a claimed sensitivity of 90dB. The SUR55T has the same frequency response but is slightly less sensitive at 85dB. These numbers aren’t quite as good as the S150 monitors, which drop a little deep and are easier to drive, but they’re very close.

All three models are available in an attractive black vinyl finish, which is fine by me because I’m from the Henry Ford school of colour choices when it comes to home cinema speakers. The build quality is excellent, with pleasingly inert sealed cabinets, and at the rear are high-quality gold-plated binding posts, along with holes in different configurations for various wall-mounting options. In terms of overall style, there’s not much here to...
get excited about, but you wouldn’t buy these speakers to please your fashionista friends.

The lower frequencies in this setup are provided by the V12 (£1,250 each), which is the largest of M&K’s compact subwoofers. I actually use a pair of V12s in my own reference setup, in a model with which I’m very familiar, and while not quite as burly as the big and beefy X12 [reviewed as part of the N1W15 in-wall package, HCC, June 2015], it remains a powerful and responsive bass box. The V12 carries THX Select 2 certification and uses a 12in forward-firing driver that’s housed in a sealed enclosure. The sub’s output is generated by an amplifier capable of delivering 300W RMS, with peaks up to 500W and the claimed frequency response is respectable 20Hz to 200Hz. M&K might consider the V12 ‘compact’ but it still weighs in at a hefty 22kg.

Around the back it’s all fairly straightforward in terms of connections, with just a stereo/LFE phono input and stereo phone output. The controls are equally as basic, with knobs for adjusting the volume, crossover and phase settings, along with a switch for selecting off, auto or on.

Our V12 is in its alternate white satin finish, which obviously isn’t a match for the LC750 and SUR55T models, but would no doubt fit with some of M&K Sound’s other speakers (such as its M Series models). Cost-effective concoction

The V12 isn’t the only member of the M&K lineup to grace my reference system, I also have three S150 speakers at my reference system, so it’s a model with which I’m very familiar. This combination also provided a solid platform for evaluating the neutrality, tonal balance and dynamic delivery of these speakers. The LCR750s give you a lot of acoustic bang for your hard-earned buck. M&K’s LCR750s give you a lot of acoustic bang for your hard-earned buck.

‘Entry-level is a relative term, but M&K’s 750 Series offers a level of performance that’s in excess of the price tag’

In testing, the system was controlled by a Lyngdorf MP-60 AV processor, and the speakers driven with an emotive XPA-1 amplifier (powered by a receiver next issue) – so precision and headroom certainly weren’t an issue. This combination also provided a solid platform for evaluating the neutrality, tonal balance and dynamic range of the speakers.

It was immediately apparent that despite the price differential, the 750 Series has managed to retain everything that’s great about the more professionally-oriented S150 speakers. There’s an undeniable transparency to the delivery, combined with some simply exceptional detail retrieval. The three main speakers produce a highly cohesive front soundstage, although as a purist I’d suggest installing the centre speaker vertically so it precisely matches the left and right speakers, if your set-up allows.

The soundtrack of Live Aid’s ‘1986 (4K Blu-ray) gives the M&K package a thorough sonic shake down, with its extensive steering of sound effects from channel to channel as preposterously fast cars screech around the race track. It proves very revealing of the overall tonal balance and cohesiveness, but there’s no obvious shift in the aural signature as cars zoom from speaker to speaker, where less uniform setups might struggle to maintain those purring engines. At the same time, the appropriately named V12 subwoofer meshes well with the 750s. However, as these models can’t compete with towering front-enders when it comes to resonance, our KT-3 crossover (over the THX standard), the V12 picks up where the cabinets leave off – and the don’t roll off a cliff as they reach their lower end. It remains a powerful and responsive bass box.

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Doing the Fandango

This ability to capture the ambience of a scene is again in evidence with the 1080p Blu-ray platter of Freddie Mercury bohemian Rhapsody. Queen’s first gig is a small-scale affair, with the band squeezed on to what appears to be a stage set within the studio. The house band moves with it, seamlessly integrating with the performers and the audience. The speakers reproduce the music as it’s meant to be heard, without any hint of distortion or colouration. The delivery is so seamless that it’s as if the performers and the audience are one, with every nuance of expression captured with incredible fidelity. The overall even-handed delivery and precision of these speakers is truly remarkable.

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