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Cutting down the size of sound

MK's M Series speakers may be small, but they boast high-end heritage.

Adam Rayner treats his ears to a brand back from the dead



It's not that often a speaker brand comes back from the dead. But that's just what has happened with MK Sound. The company logo may well be familiar to regular readers, as it recalls the once-famous Miller & Kreisel speaker brand.

The original M & K outfit was declared bankrupt, but now the pieces have been picked up a team of Danish audio veterans. Heading up the operation is Managing Director Chris Minto. Minto formerly looked after M & K's Professional Division.

Upon taking the reigns, he declared: 'Those classic M & K products that our customers know and love will be kept on, and those products that are not up to our highest standards will be dropped in favour of newer, better products. We intend to provide the best-possible listening experience to the audio professional and to the home theatre enthusiast alike.'

The brand's new Danish owners also have long history with Tympany, one of the world leaders in loudspeaker drive unit manufacturer and the suppliers of the drive units used in most M & K models. So I was expecting a speaker debut that recalled its forebears, and by and large wasn't disappointed. This brand has always been proud of its professional audio heritage. Models from the previous generation have been used by studios belonging to Sony, Skywalker, 20th Century Fox, Dolby

and DTS USA. In fact, although the system reviewed here represents the more affordable example of the genre, it's a direct descendant of kit originally designed for DTS' use in their post-production rooms in the States.

Those loudspeakers had a small footprint, with high dynamics, great resolution and potency and, of course, were fully-active and bi-amplified for professional use. The M Series reviewed here embrace similar philosophy, although they are regular, passive designs.

Perfect harmony

Build quality can be considered excellent. There's an unpretentious single set of pretty gold-plated connections on the back and lots of shininess all over. If you want a dust-attracting high-gloss finish you've come to the right place.

Our set came in a lustrous black-cat-on-a-dark-night shade for the fronts (the M7s), but the M4-T rear tripoles – cute as nine-pence – were supplied in white. You can order either shade, even for the subwoofer, which is something of a rarity. **You probably won't want to mix and match as we've done**, unless you've got a Madness-themed living room.

The M Series shares a woofer in common with its Xenon Series brethren. It's called the Xenon SB-12 in the Xenon leaflet but called the M-SB12 in the M-Series bump.

AV/CV

Product: Surround speaker system of classic elegant design with high performance-to-size ratio

Position: Flanked by the MK Xenon and MK Alpha systems in the brand's sub/sat lineup

Peers: Infinity TSS-4000 Acoustic Energy Aelite 5.1AV EPOS M16 5.1

Either way, it's a simple but posh item. You get a sweepable phase control with a gain and crossover/defeat knob and that's it. You can connect and carry onwards in both phono and speaker level, so it can be used with or without an off-board crossover in your rig. I, of course, hooked everything up to the amp and set about working my way through my test disc favourites, and in particular the SF action classic *Terminator 2*.

The three fronts have two tiny 4in drivers to go with the tweeter, while the slightly trapezoidal rears have a small grille on each face, fore and aft, with a dipolar set of 2in weeny speakers to go with their midbass 4in and high frequency maker.

Overall, I think the look is fabulous. The speakers have a very high standard of finish; the grilles are pressed metal mesh with protected edges and neat indentations for the tiny magnetic grips to fit into. Trendy these days, they are going to hit the fashionistas in the pocket as these are just gorgeous fixings.

Get your motor running

Performance is a revelation. Although dense spuds, this M7 system really spits out the music and effects.

I realised straightaway, however, why the efficiency or sensitivity figure wasn't quoted in the supplied literature (this is usually in dB and is a measure of how well a speaker turns, say, 1W into sound, measured >

**Monochrome:**

This sub/sat system is available in either black or white, buy one or the other – or mix 'em up

a metre away. 88dB is normal, 92 would be exceptional). The fact is, I had to crank the heck out of my reference Acurus amp, with a listening level of 60 out of 70 notches needed. Normally it's enough to break the windows at 50 out of 70!

The tweeters are good but you can hear that this is where some money has had to be saved – although they can make serious rise-times and tear your face off in an explosion, they don't have a lot of refinement. Played loud, there was some sibilance evident.

That said, dynamics absolutely belie the size of these boxes and I'm left wondering if this is something to do with the DTS-driven design. The sharp 'Proink' of the spark that ignites the truck in *T2*'s storm drain chase is brilliant. It cuts, it booms!

The speakers are fast in the midband and **the active sub is a great example of good electronics** controlling a far-better-than-normal grade woofer. It is still relevant and scary at 15Hz, clearly detectable during the low, low, low bits of Gustav's Mars (a stupendous release from Telarc in 5.1). After all, that spec is a tight +/-2dB, not 3, and it's to 20Hz.

It's only around 6dB down at 15Hz, making the lows from this system deeper than a snake's belly and loud enough to rattle your windows. This sub really has some proper grip. The room actually wobbled when the T1000's truck smashed into the concrete pillar – the set does great justice to an iconic cinematic moment.

The class of the system also shines through with the first appearance of Schwarzenegger's Terminator. Papers and empty Styrofoam cups blow around, rustling, then there are electrical sparks and a huge 'WHOOOOMP HH!' as a naked Arnie appears. Provided you have enough amplification on hand, it can lift you off your seat.

Harley Street

I do feel that, as well as the slight high-power sibilance mentioned earlier, there could have been more weight to the lower midband. When Arnie's Harley roared around, the engine really lacked some of the throaty weight that the bigger-coned 'regular-size' high-end systems can muster. However, such quibbles aside, this is a powerful set of small speakers able to deliver a genuinely big sound.

→ Specifications**MK Sound M-7**

Drive Units: 2 x 4in coated paper pulp midbass drivers with magnetically shielded magnets; 1 x 1in soft dome tweeter with Neodymium magnet and Ferrofluid cooling/damping

Enclosure: Two-way sealed

Frequency Response: 80Hz to 20kHz +/-2dB

Sensitivity: Not quoted

Power Handling: Not quoted (but high!)

Dimensions: 125(w) x 330(h) x 163(d)mm

Weight: 3.6Kg

Connections: Gold-plated binding posts

MK Sound M-4T

Drive Units: 1 x 4 in coated paper pulp midbass driver; 2 x 3in side drivers in Dipolar connection (one out of phase); 1 x 25mm soft dome tweeter with Neodymium magnet and Ferrofluid cooling/damping

Enclosure: Wedge-shaped, tripolar array (4in + 1in front, 2 x 3in fore and aft)

Frequency Response: 100Hz to 20kHz +/-2dB

Sensitivity: Not quoted

Power Handling: Not quoted

Dimensions: 152(w) x 188(h) x 171(d)mm

Weight: 2.9Kg

Connections: Gold-plated binding posts

MK Sound SB-12 subwoofer

Drive Unit: 12in 'SuperFast Deep Bass' long-throw driver

Enclosure: Sealed, high gloss black (white available too)

Frequency Response: 20Hz to 200Hz +/-3dB

On board power: 250W RMS (with trademarked 'Headroom Maximiser' circuit)

Dimensions: 381(w) x 381(h) x 438(d)mm

Weight: 20.4Kg

Connections: Twin phono inputs/outputs and gold-plated high-level speaker binding post inputs/outputs

<http://www.techradar.com/320681>

**HCC VERDICT**

MK Sound M-7 System
£1,750 Approx

Highs: Good looking and compact; high-powered dynamic output with real quality

Lows: Not very efficient in power terms, so require lots of Watts

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5