

## M&K Sound S950 Surround System Review

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**“Would we recommend it? Very much so!”**

A few months ago, **the M&K Sound S300 Series performed brilliantly in our test**, but we are well aware that not everyone needs that much power, so this time we checked out their smallest system, the S950 Series.



M&K Sound is very proud of its history and of the role it played in the birth and proliferation of subwoofers, plus, of course, the fact that **over the decades its products have become the reference at many major recording studios, including Skywalker Sound**. We simple home cinema fans do not necessarily earn as much as George Lucas did from *Star Wars*; so we might not wish to spend as much on sound technology for a home cinema as he would. Precisely for this reason, we were curious to listen to the smaller M&K Sound S950 system, at a fraction of the price of the large S300 setup, with comparable quality at roughly half the size.

### Bass Energy Bomb

**The basic building block of the S950 range, the LCR950 is a true compact gem.** It weighs nearly 7 kg, and just tapping it one can feel that it is truly solid. Of course, it has to be, on account of its sealed design to handle the bass energy of the loudspeakers without a reflex port. The LCR950 is 40 cm high, 18 cm wide, and 22 cm deep, which means that based on its dimensions, we could classify it as a standmount model.



Its kinship with the larger M&K S300 Series is evident, even though, due to its smaller size, its driver configuration is different. Specifically, instead of the characteristic M&K Sound triple dome tweeter array, it employs only a single tweeter situated above the two bass/mid drive units, whose possible impact we will return to later, as it is worth mentioning. Nonetheless, the similarity is undeniable. The robust magnetic system, cast metal baskets, the front mounting frame of the dome and, of course, the silk coating are all typical of the manufacturer.



At first glimpse, the tweeter appears to be a standard 1" dome, but beneath the surface it conceals technical solutions required to deliver high performance, such as the large, damped air chamber behind the dome. The ability to withstand higher output is also attested by the vents of the voice coil and the copper-coated aluminium coil, which is lighter than copper wires.



The manufacturer does not reveal much about the technical solutions used in the bass/mid speakers beyond the fact that they use 13 cm polypropylene cones - although it could be enough to know simply that they are derived from the drivers found in their larger models. Still, leafing through the catalogue, we were a little surprised that the manufacturer talks more about the magnetically secured metal mesh grille than about the drive units.



Naturally, in light of the **THX Select2** certification of these sealed boxes, we have no doubt that the mid/bass drivers also represent respectable quality. Besides, looking through the brochure, it is noteworthy that M&K Sound mentions the quality of assembly, phase accuracy, and the carefully designed crossover network the most. Even THX

certification is only mentioned in passing - what's more, the THX logo is packaged separately, together with the accessories, instead of being attached to the loudspeaker, as if that would be some sort of dubious boasting, which they regard as optional. So, if the owners feels like it, they can attach the THX label, but if they are purists, they can leave it in the box. To each his own.

In the M&K Sound S950 Series, we do not find smaller and larger models - the previous floorstanding version has been discontinued. As can also be seen from its name, the LCR950 can be used as front left, center and right speakers. This guarantees fulfilment of the basic requirement that individual speakers should have matching timbre, as far as possible.

In the Home Movie room there are three LCR950 speakers behind the screen. Why behind? The reasons for this are obvious. If we would like to project a large picture, but lack the opportunity to install the home cinema in a vast room, then we do not lose half a meter or even more from both sides of the screen due to the speakers. The solution is to use an acoustically transparent screen with loudspeakers that fit comfortably behind it. Another huge advantage that results from this is that the center speaker can be placed exactly where it was meant to be: in the very center of the image, at the same height as the front speakers. This produces a more uniform sound, just as in large cinemas, or even better.



### What Should We Use for Surround?

According to both the "rulebook" and experience, one should use surround speakers equipped with the same drive units as the front and center speakers. The **SUR95T** speakers meet this requirement, with an extra: the letter "T" in their model designation refers to a real rarity - tripole configuration. Specifically, this means that the front-radiating bass/mid and high-frequency drivers are complemented by two 7.5 cm pulp mid/tweeters on the two sides (oriented in dipole fashion). The result is a truly immersive sound that fills the viewing area of the room. Although this model is slightly shorter than the LCR boxes, the surface area of their cones is similar, so their capabilities resemble those of the other models in the system.



### So Is This A Satellite?

In a certain respect yes: although the LCRs can best be characterised as refined standmount speakers, they still require one (or two) active subwoofers - of the V12 type in the present case - to become truly complete. The reason for this lies in frequency response, with a lower limit of -3 dB at 80 Hz, which also matches THX recommendations. However, this frequency limitation does not mean that M&K is unable to produce speakers that operate across the "full" frequency range - they simply consider this unnecessary.



We must make it clear, however, that the M&K S950 family is very different from typical small satellite speakers. For most, this name is associated with a different, almost pejorative meaning, bringing to mind tiny, single-box "cans".

### Small Details

The Home Movie team loves watching movies and also enjoys meticulous "fussing" with settings, so it came as no surprise to us that a precisely calibrated system was already in place upon our arrival. After mounting the speakers, they ran them for two days, performed basic subwoofer setup, and then performed Audyssey Pro calibration, after which they once again checked everything.

### How Does It Sound?

During the test of the S300 system, we had already experienced something that can be said to be characteristic of M&K Sound: dynamism, without any aggressive character. This was also our first impression of the S950 setup - that is, we once again experienced part of what we heard during the previous test. The second notable feature was the excellent surround feeling, in which the speakers hidden behind the large screen and professional calibration naturally played a major part. What we heard during the test of the S300 was in fact very good, but the smaller LCR950s were positioned behind the screen, which we found to be a very pleasant modification. We experienced even more lifelike surround quality and uniform sound. Although, due to its size, its power fell short of its larger sibling, we still managed to coax levels from it which we would not like to listen at for long. In short, its power is far from small, especially in a room of this size. What's more, in this case, too, the system remained precise, without distortion or rattling, due in part to its high-quality sealed design.

### Podrace

We listened to the podrace scene from *Star Wars Episode I*, partly because for years it dominated home cinema demos, and, of course, also because the original sound for the film was created using M&K Sound speakers. But first, the usual details lined up. Now, after the test, it would be very difficult to distinguish what we heard from the experience provided by the S300, even if the available sound pressure of the latter was higher. The audio of the film was uniform and balanced, and high frequencies sounded surprisingly light and airy, which has a definite impact on dialogue and fine detail.

The biggest surprise, however, came not in connection with films, but with music. Naturally, we did not have any complaints about the S300, either, but listening to the smaller models we seriously felt that major kudos are in order here.

### Would We Recommend It?

**Very much so!** Naturally, these speakers, too, are aimed at a well-defined clientele. The M&K Sound S950 system is neither tiny enough to be easily tucked away, nor large enough to astound with its appearance. This loudspeaker is not for interior designers or exhibitionists, but for dedicated movie fans. If you would like to have a cinema room, or are willing to turn your living room into a little bit of a home cinema, have a listen to what M&K Sound is capable of!