Feel the force

Adam Rayner ignores the fashionistas and fills his room with THX Ultra speakers with Star Wars approval

The only trouble with truly durable performance-bred professional items is that they don’t need upgrading or replacing too often. Which might be why Miller & Kreisel’s new MK Sound after a restructuring of a white box, now sells regular consumer speaker systems. These S150 THX cabinets aren’t to be underestimated, though: they’re big boxes that sound rich, sweet, slammed loud and breathtakingly dynamic.

In the jungle

The children’s room in Mark Zuckerberg is a great first test, with the surround mix providing a lovely sense of Africa, and this MK Sound array revelled in it. The staccato sound of the grasslands and the flight sounds were deliciously clean and isolated from the boxes, and I was immersed into the environment the sound designers created. That all the many zebras were voiced by Chris Rock is funny, and yet I could make out dozens of slightly different Chris Rock’s chatting away during the herd scenes.

Climbed up, and it just got louder without any trace of tinnitus or effort. The fastback sequence where Alex the lion is stolen and raised inside a crate nearly lifted me off the seat with each hammer blow.

Now this has to be down to the incredibly efficient subwoofers I had on test. Although sold as a package with one MX350 MKII, HCC also auditioned a 5.2 set, and on my ears it was better than just the bass itself. The sheer scale of all the sound was immense — with four 12in drivers and around 750W of power, the air-shifting ease is fabulous. The woofers pack their twin drivers in a push-pull configuration, so when one is one way into its magnetic gap and ready to shove violently back out, the other is at its mechanical limit and ready to spring back into the chassis. This offers both cones a degree of electro-mechanical support to each other and, with the lower driver’s acoustic loading (10cm to the bottom chamber, there’s no convincing ported design rather than simply an exit point) the result can drive those down to very lower than 20Hz. Euroly.

The rears are what MK Sound calls ‘tripolecs’, as they have a quad direct radiating mid-/high and tweeter on the front but also a pair of drivers firing front and aft, dipole style. These 3.5in cones are just big enough to play mids but small enough to reach into high frequencies, and the dipole ambience that gives them THX adherence and a great shapely presentation.

And the frame? Well, these big, sealed boxes are piggy-ugly with their grills off, as the designer has simply slapped a lump of foam on the front baffles to keep the three tweeters’ outputs from interfering with each other close to the box. As the sound extends a bit further out, though, you get the synergy of all three tweeters added together, along with some real dark-arts stuff going on in the internal crossover department. The resulting sound makes them professional grade — there’s a set of these in the sound design and editing suites at Lucasfilm’s Skywalker Ranch. Rick McCallum, producer of the original Star Wars trilogy swears by ’em, apparently.

AV/CV

Product: MK Sound S150 THX Ultra II
Price: £6,600/$8,800 Approx
Position: Top of the range end product
Pros: Perfect sound quality, looks great, value for money

Reviews:

HCC VERDICT

MK Sound S150 THX Ultra II

£6,600 ($8,800) Approx

Pros: Impressive, crisp, dynamic sound with great detail and accuracy; perfect subwoofer

Cons: You don’t want to see these understated and grill-less. Heck, you just don’t want to see these at all

Overall: 4/5