

HOME CINEMA Choice

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, renamed MK Sound after a restructuring a while back, now sells regular consumer speaker systems. These S150 THX cabinets aren't to be underestimated, though; they're big boxes that sound rich, sweet, damned loud and breathtakingly dynamic.

In the jungle

The children's 'toon *Madagascar* is a great test disc, with the surround mix provoking a lovely sense of Africa, and this MK Sound array revelled in it. The susurrations of the grasslands and the night sounds were deliciously clean and divorced from the boxes, and I was immersed into the environment the sound designers created. That all the many zebras are voiced by Chris Rock is funny, and yet I could make out dozens of slightly different Chris Rocks chattering away during the herd scenes.

Cranked up, and it just got louder without any trace of stress or effort. The flashback sequence where Alex the lion is stolen and nailed 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, oh my, was it better than just twice the bass!

The sheer scale of all of the sound was immense – with four 12in drivers and around 750W of a power, the air-shifting ease is fabulous. The woofers pack their twin drivers in a push-pull configuration, so when one is all the way into its magnet 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 (I reckon the bottom chamber is in fact a massively wide-angled ported device rather than simply an exit point) the result can de-bone you down to way lower than 20Hz. Blimey.

The rears are what MK Sound calls 'Tripoles', as they have a regular direct radiating midbass and tweeter on the front but also a pair drivers firing fore and aft, dipole style. These 3.5in cones are big enough to play mids but small enough to reach into high frequencies, and add the dipolar ambience that gives them THX adherence and a great snappy presentation.

And the fronts? Well, these big, sealed lumps are pig-ugly with their grilles 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 originally *Star Wars* trilogy swears by 'em, apparently.**

Décor dilemma

Anything good enough for Rick is good enough for us, but remember these are for dedicated cinema rooms only, where the lights are dimmed and you won't be able to see the speakers mounted on walls via their threaded bushings. As they only come in Henry Ford's choice of shades, they are meant to be heard and yet visually ignored. In normal living rooms, they'll look as domestic as a HumVee in khaki.

But if you're planning a full-on cinema install, do yourself a favour and audition this system ●

→ Specifications

MK Sound S150 THX L/C/R

Drive Units: 2 x 5.25in Polypropylene midbass drivers and 3 x 1in silk dome tweeters
Enclosure: Sealed
Frequency Response: 77Hz-20kHz
Sensitivity: Not quoted
Power Handling: 400W
Dimensions: 318(h) x 276(w) x 318(d) mm
Weight: 9.5kg

MK Sound SS150 THX Tripoles

Drive Units: 1 x 5.25in Polypropylene midbass driver and 1 x 1in silk dome tweeter, plus 2 x Ferrofluid-cooled 3.25in Polypropylene mid-tweeters
Enclosure: Sealed
Frequency Response: 80Hz-20kHz
Sensitivity: Not quoted
Power Handling: 200W
Dimensions: 203(w) x 267(h) x 165(d)mm
Weight: 4.6kg

MK Sound MX350 MKII subwoofer

Drive Unit: 2 x long-throw 12in drivers in Push-Pull configuration
Enclosure: Sealed
Frequency Response: 18Hz-200Hz
On board power: 350W RMS with proprietary Headroom Maximiser IV circuitry
Dimensions: 388(w) x 596(h) x 508(d)mm
Weight: 37.3kg
Connections: Phono and three-pin XLR inputs

AV/CV

Product: Pro-audio derived and designed home theatre speaker system

Position: Top of MK Sounds product lineup, pretty much identical to those sold to the Skywalker Ranchers

Peers: Klipsch THX Ultra2; Teufel THX System 9 Ultra2; Snell Acoustics THX Ultra2

A 5.1 set of these MK Sound speakers uses no fewer than 25 separate drivers



HCC VERDICT

MK Sound S150 THX Ultra
£6,600 (5.1); £8,800 (5.2) Approx

Highs: Impactful, crisp, dynamic sound with great detail and accuracy; potent subwoofer

Lows: You don't want to see these undressed and grille-less. Heck, you just don't want to see these at all

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5