

Unleashing the power

Adam Rayner is blown away by the amazing might of this THX speaker system from Klipsch...



If Dolby Labs engendered the home cinema age with Pro-Logic, then THX elevated it to art. Based not on what the golden-eared hi-fi world had long held dear, but upon real research into what made audiences excited about the motion picture experience, THX developed standards and specifications which now cover virtually all aspects of AV electronics and software. The philosophy behind THX originated in professional mixing rooms and cinemas, but its standards can transform the ordinary viewing room.

Consider this hellacious array of THX-approved home cinema speakers, from legendary US brand Klipsch. This 7.2 collection, with massive wide horns facing all directions, is aimed squarely at the home cinema hardcore.

Our chosen system uses four of the brand's dipole KS-525-THX surrounds (with twin 5in horn tweeters and 5.25in woofers); three KL-650-THX LCRs (with a 6x10in horn tweeter, 1in compression driver and twin 6.5in woofers); and two KW-120-THX subwoofers. The subs have no internal amplifier; they're huge great boxes with a 12in driver, big slot-port in the front, and a Speakon NL2 plastic socket on the back.

Klipsch also manufactures the KL-525-THX LCR, which uses a 6x10in horn tweeter coupled to a 1in compression driver, and twin 5.25in woofers. These can be used as rear

Product:
THX Ultra2
7.2-channel
speaker system
from one of the
oldest and
most revered
brands

Position:
The pinnacle
of Klipsch's
impressive
home theatre
range

Peers:
Snell THX
Ultra2;
Atlantic
Technology
8200 THX
Ultra2;
Jamo D7
THX Ultra2

centre speakers if you should so wish. In fact any combination of the sonically-matched LCRs will deliver 'seamless performance', says Klipsch.

Also part of the package is a 1,000W amplifier required to run the subs. Dubbed the KA-1000-THX, this features a set of phono ins and outs and two of the same Speakon NL2 sockets. And that's it. You wire the subs in with the meaty Speakon-plug terminated lumps of cable, and set the controls.

Thunderstruck

To put this monolithic array through its paces, I decided to use *Black Hawk Down*, a film dear to the ears of former THX audio wizard Tomlinson Holman. Holman designed a savagely high-power and low-extending surround sound system for the US military's mission simulator, and they tested it by bringing in the pilot that *Black Hawk Down* was made about. It was so powerful and realistic that it triggered the poor chap's Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. So obviously, I wanted to see how potent this Klipsch system would be with helicopters...

The start of the movie is haunting, harrowing even. It raises goosebumps, not just because of the crisp images on my Panasonic flatscreen, but most certainly due to the smooth and effortless high and midrange sound of the massively-efficient horns. Wide dispersion is a big issue with Klipsch. There is >





This Klipsch system is designed for dedicated home cinema rooms – don't try and fit it in your lounge!



Built to deliver: The THX Ultra2 system uses Cerametallic drivers and rugged MDF cabinets

no small sweet spot, it's the whole room, as the highs spread out wide from those horns. The speaker drivers are branded 'Cerametallic', which is a super-rigid pistonic cone technology that allows a snappy, low-power compression sound that marries up beautifully to the upper horn-tones. And they use a classic, well-proven port technology: the slot.

Power pusher: The 1,000W KA-1000-THX amplifier (below, front and back) makes the twin subwoofers sing



HOME CINEMA CHOICE FEBRUARY 2009

boxes can generate astonishing acoustic horsepower, too, and happily brag about their abilities to drop a note. How about 112dB at an almost infrasonic 15Hz?

That is deep into the seismic fear-register and you will feel this rumble in your chest. Which meant that *Black Hawk Down's* chopper fly-over (at 11m35s) scared the hell out of me, too! The answer to 'How good with helicopters?' was provided and comprehensive: not just loud and meaty and detailed, but rich and fat and with vast pressure on each WHUP-WHUP of the rotor blades.

The overall efficiency of this set is just... mental. Hardly a tweak of your volume and **you will be nailed to the sofa with beauty and aplomb.**

Class apart

All this talk of might could make you think the Klipsch THX Ultra2 system is a product for hooligans, but the fact is that it can do delicacy and refinement, too. Amazing detail retrieval, and superb definition to the edges of sounds, means that the impact the system delivers seems effortless. And the Klipsch array does all this without the faintest hint of strain, or any onset of the harsh toughness that overcomes many speakers when you get over-excited and crank them up.

The only caveat to this £6,000 setup is that these fabulous speakers – like those of a few other top-end brands, Miller & Kreisel in particular – are so God-like in their acoustic signature and so close to professional audio tools that cosmetics have been left completely behind. They are finished in a matt concoction called 'Galaxy Black', and they have black anodised aluminium front panels hidden behind plastic and cloth grilles. They are pig-ugly – no veneer, a real Henry Ford choice. Presumably it's because in most installs, they are hidden behind acoustic walls.

They can also be wall-mounted by way of the OmniMount suspension points on the rear of the LCRs and surrounds. In fact their very rugged and fancy internal 'dado and rabbit' MDF construction is designed to allow them to be suspended without their own weight dismantling themselves. They can be hung in the upper corners of a big room, not be looked at, yet able to reach every audience member and touch them with raw power. Overall, then, very highly recommended ●

→ Specifications

Klipsch KL-650 THX LCR

Drive Units: 2 x 6.5in Cerametallic™ coned LF drivers with cast aluminium chassis; 1 x 6x10in Tractrix® horn; 1 x 1in titanium compression driver
Enclosure type: Rugged suspendable cabinet with front slot port for the bass and OmniMount® suspension points
Frequency Response: 48Hz-20kHz (+/-3dB)
Sensitivity: 97dB
Power Handling: 150W
Dimensions: 432(w) x 381(h) x 318(d)mm
Weight: 17.7Kg

Klipsch KS-525 THX Dipoles

Drive Units: 2 x 5.25in Cerametallic™ coned LF drivers with cast aluminium chassis; 1 x 5in in Tractrix® horn
Enclosure type: Sealed two-way Dipole
Frequency Response: 80Hz-20kHz (+/-3dB)
Sensitivity: 96dB
Power Handling: 100W
Dimensions: 330(w) x 350(h) x 216(d)mm
Weight: 9.1Kg

Klipsch KW-120 THX Subwoofer

Drive Unit: 12in long-throw Cerametallic™ coned driver with cast aluminium chassis
Enclosure type: Ported, front-firing slot
Frequency Response: 20Hz-200Hz (+/-3dB): 130dB @ 30Hz, 122dB @ 20Hz, 112dB @ 15Hz!
Off-Board Power: 1,000W RMS Class D from separate KA-1000 THX sub amplifier unit
Dimensions: 451(w) x 514(h) x 451(d)mm
Weight: 36Kg
Connections: Single gastight Neutrik Speakon NL2 socket



HCC VERDICT

Klipsch THX Ultra2 7.2 system
 £6,100 Approx
Price check: www.techradar.com/487291
Highs: Sparkling, highly-detailed sound with dynamics; big impact and bass extension and wide 'sweet spot'
Lows: Hardcore design may upset your feng shui

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5
Design: 1 2 3 4 5
Others: 1 2 3 4 5
Overall: 1 2 3 4 5