

Klipsch RF-3 speaker system Bringing the cinema home? By Tony Davey

Klipsch RF-3 home theatre speaker system. \$5197

RF-3 speakers \$2499. RC-3 centre \$999. RS-3 surrounds \$1699.

Klipsch is a company that has been in the sound reproduction business for over 50 years. Whilst their profile in New Zealand may not be as high as some other brands, that is not for a lack of products or quality. Their product lines include multi-media speakers for your PC, home audio speakers and commercial theatre speakers.

All of the speakers are made using Klipsch's patented "Tantrix" horn for the tweeters. Horn tweeters are at the heart of Klipsch's sound philosophy. A horn is capable of producing sounds at greater volume, with less distortion and with less effort. This philosophy certainly came true. The higher sensitivity ratings were evident early on as I found myself turning the volume down!

The home theatre speaker package auditioned were Klipsch's RF-3 package, consisting of the RF-3 main speakers, RC-3 centre speaker, RS-3 bipole surround speakers and a KSW-12 active sub-woofer. The RF-3 home theatre package is the starting package for their reference series speakers.

All of the speakers include aluminium mid-woofers, plus Klipsch's horn tweeter.

The RS-3 surrounds are bipolar in design, with the central bass driver flanked by two 2.5cm tweeters. The tweeters are angled forward and backwards allowing the sound to be diffused and envelop the listener.

The final piece in the theatre package is a KSW-12 active sub-woofer. The KSW-12 has a single down firing 30.5cm fiber-composite cone, amplification of 105 watts continuous power (440 watts peak) and is capable of sound down to a very respectable 22Hz. The unit is rear ported and finished in Black Matte vinyl.

Performance

I tested the speakers both as a complete package in a home theatre/multi channel music environ-



ment and as two-channel audio.

Among the music used to audition the RF-3's in stereo was Pink Floyd's *The Wall*. This is a great album with a mix of fine detail, heavy electric guitar, solid punchy bass tracks and outstanding vocals.

The RF-3's were extremely detailed in their rendition. The sound of the crickets in *Hey You* were brought to life. The RF-3's delivered the heavy electric guitar piece in *Comfortably Numb* with real weight and the bass was solid and tight throughout. With bass extension down to 37Hz, the RF-3's operated comfortably without the use of a sub-woofer. The overall sound was quite forward and perhaps "treble heavy", with a tendency to emphasize the upper range of music.

As a complete package I again listened to Pink Floyd's *The Wall*, this time on DVD. There was quite a lot of restoration and additional enhancements that went into the DVD of *The Wall*, the Dolby Digital mix is spectacular.

The RF-3 speaker package sounded marvelous for multi-channel music. The additional work on the mix was evident right from the opening scenes, the speakers worked in harmony with the guitar and electric piano sounding full bodied and totally enveloping. Given that the sub was now in full use, bass extension was improved and added to the feel of the sound track.

Con Air is filled with crash and boom

entertainment, with all six speakers getting a good work out. The RF-3 package simply took the soundtrack in stride. Explosions were deep and full-bodied and the sub never felt like giving up. The surrounds, which are in almost constant use, were totally enveloping and had real wallop and the mains assisted brilliantly to support the onscreen action. However, the centre channel drew a little more attention to itself than I am used to. Voices seemed "up close and personal" rather than blending in with the onscreen action.

The package did well up loud, but one area that impressed me was in quiet listening conditions. I put on *Chicken Run* (in DTS) and played the movie at low volume levels. Voices remained crystal clear, the accompanying soundtrack (music and other effects) were still portrayed with depth and despite the reduced volumes and the surrounds continued to envelop me in the sound field, impressive indeed.

Summary

As a home theatre package, the RF-3 system performed well, if a little forward in their delivery. The mains have plenty of punch and depth, whilst maintaining excellent levels of fine detail through the horn tweeters, while the surround speakers are remarkable. The sub blends marvelously into the system delivering plenty of slam when needed and is capable of excellent levels of output.