

Hunting dinos with M&K's Indominus X

The flagship model in M&K's upgraded X+ Series is the first of its subwoofers to be certified THX Dominus. **Steve Withers** hires a forklift and checks it out

1 **ALL SPEAKERS OPERATE** on the same basic principle of generating sound by physically moving air. The bigger the driver, the more air being shifted and the lower the frequencies. At the end of the day there's no replacement for displacement, so if you want big bass you need a big woofer.

M&K Sound's X+ Series of subwoofers perfectly encapsulate this philosophy. The new lineup, which builds on the platform of the earlier X Series, features three new THX-certified subwoofers – the X10+, the X12+ and the X15+. While the first two are upgraded versions of existing models, the flagship X15+ is a completely new design and the company's first woofer to be certified THX Dominus.

All three use a push-pull driver configuration, aiming to reduce distortion and increase bass potential output. With the X15+ sporting a pair of 15in woofers, there's no prize for guessing the size of those found in the X12+ and X10+.

M&K Sound's drivers are a new 'ground-up' design, engineered, we're told, to match the X+ Series' (also new) amplifiers. Cones are hewn from carbon fibre for improved strength and rigidity, allowing them to handle increased power and excursion; CNC-machined, extruded aluminium 'Distortion Killer Shorting Rings' are deployed within the driver motor assembly for further control; surrounds have been updated from polymer-coated foam to nitrile rubber; and the aluminium voice coil is a monster 75mm diameter design. There's a lot going on behind the scenes (or in full view actually...).

Driving the X+ Series woofers are ICEpower Class D amps. Opting for high-efficiency Class D, rather than Class AB, makes complete sense when the desired power output is 700W (RMS – with peaks up to 1,400W), as it is here.

Smoothly does it

M&K's cabinet features a new 25mm MDF construction with further attention paid to bracing to minimise vibrations and control resonances, and the cosmetics have also been given a makeover and now mirror M&K's matte black S150 and S300 speakers (HCC #289). The recessed front baffle has been replaced by a smooth facade, with magnetic grille attachments rather than



HOME CINEMA
Choice
REFERENCE STATUS

AV INFO

PRODUCT: High-end dual 15in subwoofer with THX Dominus certification

POSITION: Flagship model in M&K Sound lineup

PEERS: SVS PB16-Ultra; Perlisten D215s; REL No. 25

the pegs used previously. Finally, the threaded inserts on the subwoofer feet provide the option of acquiring aftermarket spikes or vibration isolators.

The first thing you notice about the X15+ is that it's about the size of a fridge/freezer (despite M&K insisting its push-pull driver implementation allows for a 'smaller cabinet volume'). This is a serious subwoofer that stands nearly a metre high and weighs over 60kg. The THX Dominus certification (a new category) shows it's intended for home theatres up to 184 cubic metres, with a six-metre viewing distance, but it's surely likely to find its way into smaller rooms owned by serious bass addicts – once they've found a mate to help them lift it.

The second thing you'll notice is that driver mounted at the bottom, firing upwards and into the cabinet. This is effectively two subwoofers in one enclosure, with this inverted driver out of phase with the front-facing unit. It looks weird, but works wonders.

The most difficult aspect of setup was actually getting the X15+ into position, but after calling in a few favours it was installed in an area of my home cinema I know has an

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even bass response. I connected it to my Trinnov Altitude16 AV processor using balanced XLR cable, although there are also RCA inputs if your prefer.

The sub has a bass level control that can also be fixed for THX processors and receivers, a variable phase control (0-180), and a choice of low pass filter options (variable, 80Hz fixed, and no filter at all). There's also a THX Bass EQ setting for full bass extension, and an Anechoic MK EQ setting for smaller rooms or music reproduction. Naturally, I picked the former.

Off to a flyer

Testing kicked off with my usual one-two of *Edge of Tomorrow* and *House of Flying Daggers*, Blu-rays that have sequences ideal for evaluating the capabilities of a sub.

The X15+ handled the deep bass note at the start of the former with admirable skill, suggesting M&K's claim that it can go well below 20Hz is accurate. This is bass you feel rather than hear, with frequencies so low they're actually scary.

Despite visual appearances to the contrary, the X15+'s cabinet is acoustically sealed, with the large open space at the bottom venting the sub's increased output into the room, rather than tuning it. The 'Drum Dance' sequence in *House...* is a test of speed, control and agility, and the X15+ proved surprisingly nimble for something so, so big.

Since this woofer is certified THX Dominus, I reached for the 4K disc of *Jurassic World*. When we're first introduced to the film's hybrid dinosaur villain – the appropriately named Indominus Rex – we hear rather than see it. The X15+ did a superlative job of adding scale and making you think there's a 50-foot creature lurking in your room.

There was an undeniable authority to this subwoofer's performance, such as when the giant Mosasaurus slams into the water as our young heroes get their first taste of the park's star attractions. But later, when the Indominus Rex attacks them in a bubble tour vehicle, the X15+ also impressed with its ability to articulate fine bass details, evoking the beast's heavy breathing and stomping feet.

SPECIFICATIONS

DRIVE UNITS: 2 x 15in extra long-throw drivers **ENCLOSURE:** Sealed cabinet with push-pull driver configuration **ONBOARD POWER (CLAIMED):** 700W (RMS) ICEpower Class D amp **FREQUENCY RESPONSE (CLAIMED):** 16Hz-200Hz (+/-3dB) **REMOTE CONTROL:** No **DIMENSIONS:** 833(h) x 515(w) x 460(d)mm **WEIGHT:** 61kg

FEATURES: Stereo/LFE line-level RCA and balanced XLR inputs; line-level RCA and balanced XLR passthrough outputs; bass level control (THX fixed or variable); switchable low pass filters (fixed 80Hz, variable, THX no low pass); continuously variable phase control (0-180 degrees); switchable LFE (optional THX or MK EQ modes); auto on feature

TESTED WITH



JURASSIC WORLD: Smash-hit sequel delivers the kind of rumbling, thudding DTS soundtrack (available as DTS:X on the 4K Blu-ray version) you expect from the *Jurassic Park* franchise. The mix here is an infrasonic masterclass from start to finish, with the best moments saved for the film's Indominus Rex dino.

When you want to feel bass hit you like a tsunami, *Godzilla vs Kong* (4K BD) is an obvious choice. The first punch-up between the two titans takes place at sea, and when Kong jumps onto the deck of an aircraft carrier, the X15+'s dual drivers hit like a sledgehammer. The impact was improbably deep, but controlled and powerful too.

Skip to the climactic Hong Kong scrap between *Godzilla, Kong and Mechagodzilla*, and the sense of slam and scale this subwoofer brought to the skyscraper-destroying action

was gobsmacking to the point I worried about the integrity of my own house. Yet at no point did the X15+ ever feel overwhelmed by the massive LF requirements put on it. It just seemed to breeze through.

Got anything smaller?

M&K has achieved the near-impossible task of delivering subterranean depth with remarkable speed and agility – like an acoustic combination of bricklayer's shoulders and ballet dancer's feet. The X15+ is probably too big for most UK installations, but I imagine the smaller and more affordable X12+ and X10+ models would be more than up to the job.

Ultimately this sub offers the kind of performance we expect from a manufacturer that has been a pioneer of the idea of subwoofers in the home. But, considering the sheer size of the X15+, it's more likely to be a stately home ■

1. The lower, inverted 15in woofer fires into the cabinet and is out of phase with the conventional front-facing driver

2. Connections include a balanced XLR input for high-end AV processors



HCC VERDICT

★★★★★

M&K Sound X15+
→ £5,995 → mksound.com

WE SAY: This behemoth uses its push-pull driver configuration to generate seismic amounts of bass, while managing to be remarkably detailed and articulate in the process. Stunning.