

A New Standard for \$100 Speakers



BY DON LABRIOLA

PC MAGAZINE EDITORS' CHOICE
 Few \$100 desktop speakers produce even moderately natural-sounding output, so when a system like the **Klipsch ProMedia Ultra 2.0** passes through our doors, we pay attention. The Ultra 2.0 produces some of the most live-sounding output we've heard from any value-priced system.

Our test unit's midrange was surprisingly airy and detailed, reproducing subtle room reverberations as well as all but the best systems we've tested. A capella vocals, acoustic piano, percussion, and 12-string and classical guitar all sounded very lifelike. The 6.5-inch-deep satellites produced little output below 50 Hz, but generated well-defined, uncolored output in the higher bass registers and were never muddy or boomy. Kick

drums sounded punchy and tight, and we could easily hear the pitch of every note in a well-recorded bass line.

Each 10.5-inch-high mini-tower satellite contains a pair of oversized 2.5-inch midrange drivers vertically aligned with a 1-inch horn-loaded tweeter. This design creates an image that is both tall and wide, resulting in the type of spacious, realistic soundstage that can't be duplicated by simply switching on a 3D spatialization function.

Our test unit's frequency-response curve exhibited a few minor peaks and dips, but on the whole was well behaved from about 90 Hz through 13 kHz. Unlike the Altec Lansing MX5020 (our previous Editors' Choice in this class), which suffers from an exaggerated upper bass and understated lower midrange, the Ultra 2.0

doesn't favor any frequency range. Both systems produced respectable low ends, with their output at 50 Hz dropping only 10 dB below the level at 1 kHz. Both also generated output up to about 13 kHz, resulting in high ends that were detailed without being harsh, brittle, or dull.

The one area in which the Ultra 2.0 falls behind

the MX5020 is dynamic range. Neither system gets especially loud, but the MX5020's 96-dB maximum output level (unweighted pink noise measured at 18 inches) handily surpasses the Klipsch system's 88-dB figure. We also found that the Ultra 2.0 had more of a tendency to distort bottom-heavy material at higher bass-level settings, and it rattled a bit at louder volumes when playing content in the 900- to 1,100-Hz range.

If you can live with these constraints, we don't think you'll be disappointed with the Klipsch ProMedia Ultra 2.0. The Altec Lansing MX5020 may come close, but from the standpoint of pure sonic accuracy, the Ultra 2.0 is the best \$100 system we've tested to date.



CLEAN SOUND and a low price are a winning combo.

Klipsch ProMedia Ultra 2.0

\$99.99 direct. Klipsch Audio Technologies, www.klipsch.com. ●●●●●

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