



Size Nines

When you have a winning formula, you can tweak it or make more of it. **Ed Selley** considers Klipsch's attempts at the latter

Product development is a variable business. Should you happen on a design or platform that has been commercially successful, your options for what happens next take two forms. You can choose to evolve that platform into something related but different to occupy different parts of the market or you can make it bigger or smaller. In Klipsch's case, the success it has enjoyed with The Fives (HFC 467); a powered speaker that balances its distinctive driver tech and useful connectivity has been scaled up into The Sevens and supersized for The Nines you see here.

The Nines is functionally identical to its little sibling. The main speaker (which Klipsch has made switchable so it can be either the left or right channel depending on what suits connections you are making) has a USB-B audio input, HDMI ARC in, an

optical connection and an RCA input that can either be a line-in or a moving-magnet phono stage. You'll also find a 3.5mm line input, Bluetooth and a sub out. What you won't find is any form of wireless functionality beyond Bluetooth. Where The Fives operates at a price point that this is less of an issue, the Nines finds itself much closer to rivals that are completely self-contained in this regard.

Control options for The Nines are similar to what went before too. The main speaker has volume and a rotary input selector on the top, which work well enough but are pretty much invisible when seated. Klipsch has created a BLE Bluetooth app for the entire range and, as well as input selection and volume control, this also allows EQ adjustment. I find the app inconsistent in use. It wants to pair with the speakers as part of being

selected (which is not required for BLE operation) and loses connection on a few occasions. Happily, the prosaic but reliable remote handset remains on hand too.

Where The Nines is different to the The Fives is the size of each cabinet. The smaller cabinet has a lot in common with a regular standmount, but The Nines is a heftier proposition. The mid/bass driver is 203mm and, while the tweeter is the same 25mm option as The Fives, the 'Tractrix' horn in which it is placed is larger. Power is split with 100W available to the mid/bass driver and 30W to the tweeter, and while Klipsch quotes higher dynamic figures, this is likely to be sufficient for most requirements.

Unsurprisingly, The Nines looks like a pair of Fives that has doubled in size, which yields some surprising

The easy-going flow perfectly fits The Nines' 'Golden Age of Rock' aesthetic

aesthetic results. The bigger speaker looks much more like a Klipsch product and its proportions are so much more appealing.

Some aspects of The Nines need a moment's thought when it comes to placement, but it is reasonably user friendly. A 'normal' speaker stand looks a bit odd under its significant bulk and leaves it a little too high off the floor. Klipsch makes a dedicated stand, but our review pair works happily on a pair that come supplied with Mission's 700 (HFC 496). Something else to pay attention to is the distance between the cabinets. Klipsch uses a proprietary locking four-pin cable to send audio to the passive speaker and if you are a longer distance apart your only real option is to use the (supplied) lengthy extension and stow the spare length as best as you can.

Sound quality

One slightly unwelcome aspect of The Nines' performance shared with the smaller speaker is Dynamic Bass EQ. This is designed to bolster the low-end output when running at low

DETAILS

PRODUCT
Klipsch The Nines

ORIGIN
USA/China

TYPE
Powered
loudspeaker

WEIGHT
Primary: 12.88kg
Secondary: 12.25kg

DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
241 x 486 x 340mm

FEATURES
• 25mm titanium
Tractrix horn tweeter
• 203mm long-throw
mid/bass driver
• Quoted system
amplification: 240W

DISTRIBUTOR
Henley Audio Ltd.

WEBSITE
klipsch.com
henleyaudio.co.uk

volumes. Annoyingly, its default state is on and to turn it off you have to press the 'Sub' button on the remote for a few seconds. With it engaged, Klipsch claims The Nines will extend down to 22Hz which might be correct with a little roll-off, but the sound is leaden and lacks any subtlety.

Disable this, however, and The Nines starts to impress. The old American adage that there's no replacement for displacement has a fair degree of relevance here as there is a sense of effortlessness to how this speaker creates space and scale that really only comes from a hefty driver inside a large cabinet. The sweeping scope of Tool's *Fear Inoculum* is delivered with an ease that simply doesn't come to narrow baffle speakers.

The sound is an identifiably Klipsch one too. The trademark tweeter arrangement is impressively unboxy and possesses an airiness that assists an already wide and spacious presentation. Like a few other Klipsch speakers I have tested over the years, The Nines points out when material is poorly recorded, but not to the point where the result is unlistenable. The handover between the two very different drivers is impressively seamless and The Nines feels very tonally even across its

HOW IT COMPARES

The Klipsch is £700 cheaper than the outstanding LS50 Wireless II from KEF (HFC 488). Turning the USB input of The Nines into a streaming front end like the KEF requires the addition of something like an iFi Audio ZEN Stream (HFC 485) which costs £400 of your £700 saving and needs an extra mains plug to function. In pure performance terms the Klipsch can keep the KEF honest. The LS50 is faster and a little more focussed in its presentation, but it can't match the scale and impact of the Klipsch. A wireless-equipped version would be much more of a formidable threat to rivals.



extensive frequency range. You can argue that this is not the most ballistic-sounding speaker this sort of money can buy. The euphoric *The Love Invention* by Alison Goldfrapp never sounds sluggish, but there isn't the feeling of bite and attack that I've heard elsewhere. With the sort of tempos that are normally found in

considering is that, if you are running The Nines with an LCD screen that is largely impervious to image retention, you could lean on that as your audio source as most smart TVs have a wide range of music apps available to them (although your sample rate will lock to 48kHz over HDMI ARC).

The Nines looks more like a Klipsch and its proportions are more appealing

non-electronic categories, though, the Klipsch has an easy-going flow that befits something with its 'Golden Age of Rock' aesthetic. As with a number of devices of this nature I have tested, its character doesn't alter significantly between analogue and digital inputs and I suspect that the USB connection will be more than good enough for most owners. The phono stage is mechanically identical to the one in The Fives and is fine for casual listening, but serious turntable users might want to switch it out and look at an external option.

It's the HDMI connection that is the star of the show, though. It works flawlessly in matching The Nines to your TV, turning it on and off and slaving the volume control to the TV remote. That big, spacious presentation works a charm across a wide swathe of material and the result is capable of seeing off a number of very talented soundbars. Something worth

Conclusion

The need to work out how to implement a streaming front end in the absence of wireless is probably the most irritating aspect of The Nines and I can see people being swayed by rivals that don't need the same effort. There is a huge amount to like about the biggest Klipsch powered speaker, however; it's a different take on an all-in-one system and the size and scale it can deliver will win over many converts. The Nines' supersized take on a powered speaker isn't perfect, but the premise stands up to the increase in scale very well ●



Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY ★★★★★ **LIKE:** Big, spacious and effortless sound; excellent HDMI;

VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★ **DISLIKE:** Lack of wireless; dynamic EQ mode sounds poor

BUILD QUALITY ★★★★★ **WE SAY:** A different take on the powered speaker that isn't perfect, but delivers an engaging performance

FEATURES ★★★★★

OVERALL

★★★★★