

Klipsch Lifestyle

The Three II table-top speaker



IN THE MOVIE *Superman 2* our hero, suffering from a conflict between his mild-mannered Clark Kent persona and his super-powered alter ego, develops a split personality and literally divides himself into two. Something similar seems to have happened with The Three II from Klipsch Lifestyle. The first version – simply called The Three – was a multi-room speaker that combined wireless connectivity with an array of inputs. The Three II leans more heavily towards wired connectivity that even runs to a built-in MM phono stage, while a second model – The Three Google Assistant – hangs onto the wireless and multi-room features, as well as gaining support for Google's voice control technology.

Retro chic

Klipsch refers to the design as “mid-century modern”, and it certainly has an attractive retro look, with sturdy wooden panels and both black or walnut finish options incorporate fabric grilles and chunky metal buttons and switches on the top control panel. A remote control is also supplied.

Described as a “tabletop stereo” system, at 348 x 178 x 203mm (WxHxD) and weighing in at 4.7kg The Three II has a considerable footprint. It claims 120W stereo sound output via its two 57mm high-frequency drivers mounted either side of a single 133mm bass driver. There's also an outward-facing passive radiator on each side to enhance bass output.

Connectivity includes a 3.5mm, switchable line-level and moving-magnet phono stage inputs via stereo RCAs. There's also a USB-B port for hookup to computers and mobile devices, with support for PCM file formats up to 24-bit/192kHz. Wireless connectivity is supported via Bluetooth, but there is no support for aptX or AAC codecs.

Wired connectivity makes The Three II ideal for use with my iPad and iFi Audio's xDSD DAC (HFC 439), allowing playback of lossless ALAC files stored on the iPad as well



as streams from music services such as Tidal and Qobuz, which work a treat. Sturgill Simpson's *Sound & Fury* album requires a keen ear to pick out its contrasting – and sometimes clashing – elements, but The Three II takes everything in its stride. The distorted guitars form a rock-steady foundation, as the fizzing electronic

The Three II provides a highly attractive performance via wired connections

keyboards shoot around the room like fireworks. Yet it's the crisp, tight cymbal that sets the pace and holds the chaotic sound together.

Slowing things down, the same precision and balance is on display with *The Waves*, from Max Richter's *Three Worlds* album (inspired by the works of Virginia Woolf). The piece has the slowest of slow builds and The Three II allows the opening electronic chimes to hang in the air, while the barely audible background

sound effects evoke the gentle wash of waves, as though heard from afar. The slow introduction of the strings and falsetto soloist adds a sense of urgency, but The Three II holds them in check, maintaining a sense of tension throughout the 20-minute performance. The strings slowly increase in pace and intensity, but the light falsetto remains clear and haunting, emphasised by the unexpected introduction of horns that jar like the anticipation of tragedy. It's an impressive performance via a wired hookup, but switching to Bluetooth wireless proves disappointing as it loses some of its intensity as the clarity of the higher frequencies of the horns and vocals appear to be missing some of their emotional sharpness.

For wired connections, particularly using a DAC with other digital sources or even a turntable for vinyl, The Three II provides an attractive sound as a single-chassis desktop speaker. If you seek greater wireless versatility then the £450 Three Google Assistant smart speaker looks to be the better option. **CJ**

DETAILS

PRICE
£400
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OUR VERDICT

