

Attention Geekers: Check Out These Speakers!

Two sets of 2.1 speakers enter *Maximum PC's* Thunderdome

Hey, we'd all love to have a set of 5.1 speakers, but cramped quarters and crabby neighbors can quickly spoil that party. Rather than move to the country, a better solution is to adopt a smaller, gentler 2.1 speaker system. This month we take a look at two new systems from industry-heavyweight Klipsch as well as newcomer (at least to our pages) Edifier. Both are impressive. One is a wee bit more amazing than the other.

—JOSH NOREM

Klipsch ProMedia GMX A-2.1

When Klipsch first released its GMX series in early 2003, the speakers were strictly digital, and thus offered little value to PC owners (nForce mobo users notwithstanding). The lack of analog inputs angered us, and as a consequence we gave the GMX D-5.1 set a lowly verdict of 6. We'd like to believe that, after reading our review, Klipsch's CEO belatedly followed to his staff, "Correct this travesty at once!" resulting in the creation of the analog-only GMX speakers pictured here. The GMX A-2.1 system has now become the benchmark for 2.1 excellence.

The primary difference between the A-2.1 and the previous non-GMX model is an all-new two-way satellite design that pivots on a ball, so you can adjust them to face up, down, left, or right. The subwoofer is also an all-new design with a rear-facing port that runs the entire width of the enclosure; as with the SWS Subwoofer and the ProMedia Ultra 5.1, controls are accessed via a large, disc-shaped pod. We're not fans of the pod for two reasons: It takes up a lot of space and the headphone jack is located on the rear, making access difficult.

During testing, one acoustical characteristic stood out: The sound feels huge, especially considering this is a 2.1 system. When we cranked up these speakers, we felt like we needed

to take a few steps back to fully appreciate the quality and quantity of rich, luscious audio washing over us. Sound is projected extremely well, making for a sweet spot the size of Montana. The subwoofer peters out a bit at maximum volume, but sounds deep without being boomy at rational listening levels.

Edifier S2.1D

We'd never heard of Edifier before, so when the Canadian company offered us its finest 2.1 speaker system, we skeptically expected it to suck, and therefore eagerly agreed to a review. But lo and behold, the S2.1D doesn't suck. In fact, it's actually pretty darn good.

The S2.1D certainly looks nice, sporting an aesthetic that's classic "Hi-Fi," with MDF enclosures and removable speaker grills for both the satellites and subwoofer. Each two-way satellite is spec'd to pump out 20W apiece, with the 6.5-inch subwoofer reported to deliver 40W RMS. These numbers aren't super impressive, but what's most important is how they sound. An interesting twist: These speakers offer both analog and digital inputs, including both coaxial and optical (an optical cable is even included). Controls are accessed via a wired remote that lets you adjust volume, bass, treble, loudness (think Hi-Fi) and balance. The controls are easy to use and we appreciate being able to adjust both treble and bass. Unfortunately, these speakers have one fatal flaw—they lack a headphone jack. As apartment dwellers, we use headphones frequently, so this is a glaring omission.

In Lab tests, the speakers performed admirably. Compared side-by-side with the Klipsch speakers on this page, they offered a bit more treble but not quite as much bass. The result was astounding high- and midrange clarity at normal volumes, but a lack of bass response at higher



Klipsch ProMedia

MAXIMUM PC VERDICT **9**

+ MEOWERS

Fantastic fidelity and amazing power.

- WOOFERS

Control pod is too big, and headphone jack is hard to access.

\$150, www.klipsch.com

We weren't big fans of Klipsch's digital-only GMX speakers, but this new analog version is the dog's bollocks.

volumes. Furthermore, the satellites didn't project sound as well as the ProMedias, and the subwoofer is just not quite as powerful as we like—bass tones tapered off at about 60Hz or so, and increasing the volume all the way resulted in distortion from both the satellites and subwoofer.

The Edifier system isn't quite as powerful or as elegant sounding as the ProMedia, but it is \$50 less expensive.



Edifier S2.1D

MAXIMUM PC VERDICT **8**

+ HAWAIIAN WEATHER

Exceptional sound, plenty of input options, and great value.

- HAWAIIAN FOOD

Subwoofer lacks headroom, and a headphone jack is not included.

\$105, www.edifier.com

Edifier's speakers, which cost just \$105, look and sound like speakers that cost twice as much.