

BLUE SKY MediaDesk

Blue Sky thinks small with its new MediaDesk 2.1.

Paul Pettengale finds out if it punches above its weight.



MEDIADESK

Manufacturer **Blue Sky**

Price **£499**

Contact

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METHOD SPOT 5.1 or 2.1?

So what if you need to monitor in 5.1 channels for sound-to-picture applications, rather than in just the two channels (plus a bass channel) afforded by the MediaDesk system? Thankfully, you can do just that by adding three more satellites, a three-channel amp module, a wired remote calibration control and all the cabling you need to plug it together. Call Sonic Distribution for details and pricing.

Think of half a dozen reasons why monitoring with a 2.1-configured system (two limited-frequency speakers and a subwoofer) is a good idea, and some 'pure' stereo advocate will come up with an equal number of counter arguments. OK, so you get a better frequency spread, but if that's what you're after, why not simply go for very large main monitors, rather than fiddling about with subwoofer placement and phasing issues? You'll save desk space, but bass isn't omni-directional and the ear can hear if it's coming from the left or the right, especially in close monitoring situations. Blue Sky is very much an advocate of the 2.1 system – indeed, it's all the company makes – and now its 'baby' MediaDesk 2.1 system has finally arrived, some nine months after we first auditioned it in a hotel room during winter NAMM.

Blue Hotel

Hotel rooms are not a good place to listen to speakers. Sure, they're better than exhibition halls, and they have plenty of soft furnishings to break up those unwanted sound reflections and standing waves, but ideal? No. Still, the MediaDesk, which comprises a sealed-box subwoofer housing 65 watts of peak amplification for its 8-inch coated paper cone, and two sealed satellite speakers (powered by 55-watt amps), sounded pretty good to our ears. When we were told the price, our jaws collectively dropped: £500 is a very competitive price for a 2.1 system.

Fast forward from January to the end of August and we've got a MediaDesk 2.1 system where it should be: in our studio. It's not a large room (about 4.5x3 metres), and so, we decided, an ideal setting for such a diminutive pair of speakers (being, as they are, the smallest of the three 2.1 systems currently on offer from Blue Sky). We've finally got them set up and firing at their best – although, believe us, this was no easy task. Just over two hours were spent repositioning the subwoofer and altering its gain settings until we were absolutely happy that we were achieving the best results. It turned out to be time well spent, because once we were there we were rewarded with an incredibly rich, detailed sound with nigh-on perfect integration between the sub and the sats. Bass extension feels (as well as sounds) like Blue Sky's claimed 20Hz lower limit. The upper limit achieved by the satellites is 20kHz, which should provide enough headroom for most purposes.

Speaking volumes

The great thing about the MediaDesk system is that its huge wealth of power comes across as being virtually effortless. We drove the system hard for five hours and then checked the heat coming off the rear-mounted heatsink on the sub: it was warm, but nowhere near as hot as we'd have expected. Of course, volume is relative to the distance you are from the speaker, and these speakers are designed to be used up close (we maintained a typical equilateral triangle of 1.2 metres, which we found to be optimum).

Since listening to these monitors, we've been pondering long and hard whether we preferred these to the Genelec 8030As reviewed on page 102. It's not an easy decision to make; a bit like having to choose between Kylie or Beyonce as a potential bed partner (beauty and

experience against vibrant youth and a bigger bottom end). But, we're afraid, the MediaDesk system would just about win the fight – you're looking at sound quality that's merely a smidgen below that of the Genelecs, for a whopping £230 less. OK, so you've got to find space to house that subwoofer, but the bass extension it affords is certainly worth it.

MediaDesk is, without doubt, a killer product, and that can only mean tops marks to the company in the Blue Sky corner... [MTH](#)

SUMMARY

KEY FEATURES

- 8-inch coated paper cone (sub)
- 65 watts (peak RMS, sub)
- Frequency response: 20Hz–200Hz (typical room response, sub)
- Dimensions: 16x14x15 inches (sub)
- 4-inch, cast-frame neodymium woofer (sat)
- 1-inch fabric dome tweeter (sat)
- 55 watts (peak RMS, sat)
- Frequency response: 110Hz–20kHz (sat)
- Dimensions: 6x9x5 inches (sat)

WHY BUY

- Huge frequency range for the price
- High-quality sound
- Powerful, effortless presence
- The price – it's a steal

WALK ON BY

- Takes time to set up effectively
- You need room for the sub

VERDICT

Virtually impossible to fault once you've got it set up, the Blue Sky MediaDesk is just about the best small 2.1 system money can buy, especially when you consider the price.

