

# Blue Sky MediaDesk 2.1 Monitoring System

## Expandable and Affordable Desktop Speaker Solution

Is the world ready for a diminutive speaker system that is articulate, affordable, basically sounds great and is expandable to 5.1? Blue Sky has created exactly that in the MediaDesk™ 2.1 Monitoring™ System.

The MediaDesk (\$599) comprises two satellite speakers and a subwoofer. Both of the satellites (SATs) and the sub have a brushed faux-pewter finish with contoured edges, giving them a modern look that truly sets them apart—they're not just another computer speaker. And, unlike off-the-shelf computer speakers, Blue Sky wants your set to be calibrated. The manual includes extensive guides to set up the system; test files must first be downloaded from the Blue Sky Website ([www.abluesky.com](http://www.abluesky.com)). Blue Sky is definitely on the right track here.

### COME ON, COME ON, NOW TECH ME

Both the sub and SATs are fully video-shielded. The SATs comprise a 4-inch cast-frame neodymium hemispherical woofer and a 1-inch fabric-dome neodymium tweeter. Using the amplifier that resides in the subwoofer, the frequency response is rated at 110 Hz to 20 kHz,  $\pm 3$  dB. Everything below 110 Hz goes to the subwoofer, with crossover duties happening in the amplifier and I/O section housed in the sub. The tweeter is locally crossed over at 2 kHz. All boxes are manufactured using solid  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch medium-density fiberboard (MDF).

The subwoofer comprises an 8-inch, coated nonresonance paper-cone driver with a foam surround and vented motor. Isolation and spiked feet are provided to de-couple the unit from the floor. The baffle comprises a dense, 1-inch MDF construction. Anechoic frequency response is rated at 35 Hz to 110 Hz,  $\pm 3$  dB, with in-room response at 20 Hz to 200 Hz based on a 3,000-cubic-foot room. Short-term power output for two channels driven is 55 watts x2 @  $<0.05\%$  THD into 4 ohms @ 1 kHz. Subwoofer power is 65W x1 @  $<0.05\%$  THD into 4 ohms @ 50 Hz. Mains voltage is 115/230V, 50/60Hz switchable.

### THE SETUP

The I/O section on the sub provides XLR and RCA connections for +4dBu and -10dBV input levels, respectively. The XLR input can

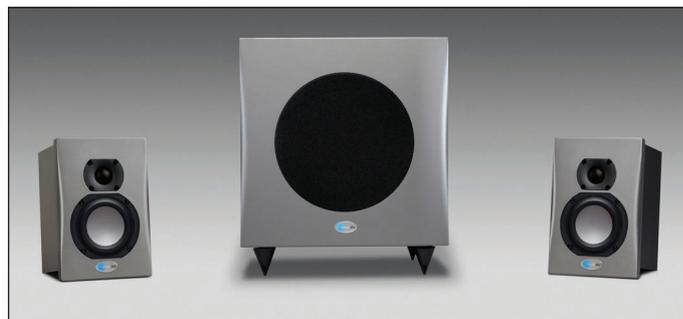
handle up to +24 dBu of signal level. There is a 2.1 Overall Gain knob and associated 2.1/5.1 mode selector switch. An Input Attenuator switch matches the XLR input level to the output of your source (+12 dBu or +24 dBu). A Subwoofer Gain knob controls the relative level of the subwoofer compared to the overall system output. There is an additional XLR subwoofer out to feed other subs. The speaker outputs are the familiar binding posts that accept bare/stranded wire, spades and banana plugs. Blue Sky conveniently supplies two 10-foot pairs of copper speaker cable, pretinned—a nice touch to get you up and running immediately.

### SOUND ON, I'LL SOUND OFF

I A/B'd the MediaDesk against a set of Alesis M1 actives, which were located on the bridge of the KK Audio desk. Now this is *not* a shootout, but I felt it necessary to listen to something in close proximity to the 2.1's price range that I was familiar with. I used both Red Book CDs and original Pro Tools files.

On first listen, I thought the speaker to be slightly crispy. As the drivers warmed up, this was not the case. As with all speakers, there is a break-in period that varies from product to product. After listening for a short time, I noticed the articulation: You can hear back *into* the mix. The reverb was represented with much more detail and separation than I expected in a speaker of this size and price point. The critical midrange was accurate, although the 125 to 250Hz range was slightly lower in amplitude on some tracks.

Various sources reveal some very nice results. Vocals on every source were virtually identical. Electric and acoustic guitars on the 2.1s were also extremely accurate. Snares and piano came slightly forward on certain cuts. Rhodes tracks were ever so thin in the mid-bass region, but the low bass was



stellar due to the inclusion of the subwoofer. Electric jazz guitar sounded “woody,” true to the original tone. Cymbals were open and airy—right where they should be and not splattery as you might expect from a little speaker such as this. The clean midrange signal made background vocals sound great. Slide guitar tracks produced nice harmonics, making them seem more alive. Synth parts were well-defined, producing clean upper harmonics. Overall, the 2.1s were the more “open” speaker in every instance.

Higher SPL can produce a bit of splatter that is not generally evident at lower levels. Lovers of low end will appreciate MediaDesk's punchy sub. While mixing “Don't Talk to Me” by the New Hampshire-based group Thinline, I found everything to be right where it should—synths, background vocals and guitars, with the low bass obviously represented in the range that the M1s lack.

### GET SURROUNDED

The 5.1 upgrade adds a 3-channel amplifier module to the back of the subwoofer, three additional SATs, a wired remote calibration and volume control, and three sets of speaker wire for \$599. Anyone whose sights are set on mixing in surround should not make their speaker decision—in this price range—until they hear the Blue Sky MediaDesk. Definitely a must-listen.

Blue Sky, 516/249-1399, [www.abluesky.com](http://www.abluesky.com). ■

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