



Three tops

Klipsch's updated compact speaker provides attractive sound and phono connectivity. **Cliff Joseph** takes it on...

Originally launched in 2016, The Three was updated with The Three II in 2019 (HFC 457), but it's taken almost five years for the updated The Three Plus to arrive.

The two models look very similar, with the same rectangular 'bread-bin' design that's available with black or walnut veneer panels. However, a closer look reveals that the Three Plus is slightly larger and has smoother, more rounded edges.

On the inside it is similar to its predecessor, with two full-range drivers and subwoofer that consists of a 133.4mm long-throw driver and pair of 133.4mm passive radiators. That combination is driven by a 120W Class D amp.

Along with its stereo RCA connectors and phono/line inputs, the Three Plus includes a new micro-USB-C port for computers and mobile devices that can also be used to charge. There's also a new optical input, which provides hi-res resolutions up to 24-bit/96kHz.

Bluetooth support includes SBC and Apple's AAC codec, but not aptX. The Klipsch Connect app has a new Broadcast mode, which allows The Three Plus to be linked with up to 10 other Three Plus or One Plus speakers. But, again, this relies on Bluetooth and is limited to mono output only. That's in contrast to rivals such as the Sonos range and Apple's HomePod, which use wi-fi for more versatile multi-room features.

Sound quality

Starting with a Bluetooth connection, using Apple's AAC codec on my iPad, sound quality is pretty good as I stream a lossless version of Madonna's *Frozen* from Apple Music. It's clear and detailed, and the 120W output gives it plenty of muscle, with just 60 percent volume being more than enough to upset the neighbours. What the Bluetooth connection lacks – as is often the case with AAC – is a sense of space and dynamics, with the sound very much focused on a sweet spot in front of the speaker.

Switching to wired USB-C opens up the soundstage and allows Madonna's multi-tracked vocals to perform more freely. The chugging percussion is particularly effective, driving the track forward. The Three Plus can still pick out the slow, gentle string section, though, and there's a real sense of drama as the strings come to the fore and hold centre stage.

That sense of atmosphere is also highly effective on Max Richter's *The Waves*. Gillian Anderson's spoken vocal seems to be battered by the sound of waves crashing around her. The Three Plus has a keen ear and it spots the delicate electronic chimes, pulling them out of the maelstrom of sound and allowing the notes to remain for long, painful seconds. There's an equally precise touch on the piercing soprano of Grace Davidson, but it's the entrance of the Deutsches Filmorchester that sees the strings slowly surging up from the depths and threatening to wash away everything in their path.

Compact speakers such as this can often struggle with bass, but the Three Plus does a good job as it follows the slinky riff on Leonard Cohen's *You Want It Darker*. It glides smoothly forward and there's a good contrast with the sharp, stabbing snare that sets the tempo. Cohen's voice has a deep, gritty texture and the Three Plus is able to comfortably balance his doom-laden tones with the lighter, uplifting harmonies of the Shaar Hashomayim synagogue choir that closes the track.

DETAILS

PRODUCT
Klipsch The Three Plus

ORIGIN
USA/China

TYPE
Bluetooth bookshelf loudspeaker

WEIGHT
4.8kg

DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
355 x 213 x 178mm

FEATURES
● 2x 57mm full-range drivers; 133.4mm long-throw driver; 2x 133.4mm passive radiators
● Inputs: RCA; phono/line; micro-USB-C; optical
● Bluetooth 5.3; SBC: AAC

DISTRIBUTOR
Henley Audio

WEBSITE
klipsch.com
henleyaudio.co.uk

Conclusion

It's hard to find fault with the Three Plus when listening via a wired connection, and it will certainly work well with a turntable for vinyl aficionados. But, at this price, Klipsch needs to get on-board with proper wi-fi connectivity if it aims to compete with multi-room rivals offered by the likes of Sonos and Apple ●

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY ★★★★★ **LIKE:** Powerful, precise sound; phono stage

VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★ **DISLIKE:** No wi-fi or aptX for Bluetooth

BUILD QUALITY ★★★★★ **WESAY:** Provides strong sound quality and wired inputs, but its wireless features are a little under powered

FEATURES ★★★★★

OVERALL

