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Eclipse TD725swMk2 subwoofer

by Alan Sircom

This magazine has covered a lot of subwoofers in its time, because in most rooms the best speaker location for bass reproduction is not the same as the best placement for proper mids and highs. This holds true whether we are discussing driver placement relative to internal cabinet vibrations or speaker placement relative to low-frequency room modes. Of course, there are some loudspeakers that require more bass reinforcement than others, and arguably the Eclipse TD loudspeakers are among the most obvious candidates.

But with great power comes great responsibility, and the task of bolstering up the bass is a difficult one when it comes to blending with the Eclipse range. This is not because the subwoofer needs to reach far into the midrange, but because of the need to keep up with those crossoverless, single-driver point sources. Eclipse did an excellent job with the award-winning TD725sw, a huge square box designed to sit in the middle of your living room. And now it has replaced it with the TD725swMk2, another huge square box designed to sit in the middle of your living room. This time, however, it has a nice piano finish, rounded off corners, and some shiny trim rings around the bass drivers.

If that were the sum total of the years of development gone into the two generations of subwoofers, this wouldn't be much of a review. Fortunately, the model revision gave Eclipse a chance to go back to the drawing board, improving transient response, and pushing the low pass filter down from 40Hz to 30Hz in the process.

The TD725swMk2 uses the R2R (rear-to-rear) dual-driver arrangement found in its predecessor, with two relatively small 250mm Kevlar/paper drivers, joined together internally by an aluminium shaft. However, unlike most subwoofers (but in line with the other models in the Eclipse TD range), the TD725swMk2 not only joins the drivers together by this shaft, but makes the shaft the only means of support for the drivers, and they effectively 'float' inside the subwoofer enclosure. The two spots on the aluminium bar are coated in a vibration-reducing material, which means no stray vibration from the outside world can get in, and the loudspeakers do not influence the cabinet. This is about as close to a perfect interaction (as in, 'no interaction') between loudspeaker drive unit and cabinet as it is possible to make.



▶ The cabinet itself is a ladder-braced sealed affair, which accounts for a fair amount of the loudspeaker's impressive 51kg weight. The internal 500W amplifier is Class D (specifically, it uses a Class D IcePower module), and the TD725swMk2 has two completely separate set-up systems, which allow the user to integrate the subwoofer into a hi-fi setting and a 5.1 system. It also means you can set these differently; one for 'show' one for 'go'. In general terms, the crossover point for the 'point one' channel in a 5.1 system is typically set higher than it is for music (because 'home theatre' is about 'theatre' and 'hi-fi' is about 'fidelity'), and the subwoofer connection is usually line in on a multichannel system and through the loudspeaker terminals on stereo systems.

The all-important 'how does it sound' question is actually one of the easiest to answer in this issue. It sounds like your speakers, only more and better. Perhaps more importantly, if there are any Quad Electrostatic owners reading this looking for some low-end reinforcement that won't make your speakers sound like they have been injected with treacle, say 'hello' to the TD725swMk2, your new bass unit! This subwoofer reacts fast to music. It has the kind of rise time and decay that most dynamic loudspeakers would struggle to achieve (hence the Quad comment) and it integrates into any loudspeaker system, no matter how fast-paced.

This sets it apart from practically all subwoofers (we like the REL models for a similar reason, but this Eclipse shifts things up into high gear). And integration between main and sub speakers simply goes away in the setting up of the TD725swMk2. You need to approach this with due care and attention, but the bass fits so well, it might as well sound like one big loudspeaker. As a result, bass isn't overt through the subwoofer, it just blends and extends the sound of the loudspeaker, and this typically makes the loudspeaker sound better further up the frequency response, too. It's as if, being freed from the labours of bass, the loudspeaker itself can get on with doing what it does best: mid-range and treble. Even full-range loudspeakers improve here, although really large, really powerful full-range loudspeakers will tend to swamp the Eclipse performance.

The downsides to the TD725swMk2 subwoofer are purely physical. It's big (basically, a 55cm cube), it's heavy (51kg, as discussed earlier), and it's best placed smack bang in between you and the loudspeakers. The good news is it can make a nice mirror-finish coffee table and even dub reggae won't spill your drinks (don't do this... eventually, one of those 'the subwoofer has been drinking' nights will happen, which ends badly for electronics). But it demands a fairly significant rethink of room layout and a very accommodating (or heavily medicated) significant other, if it winds up in a shared space.

I also imagine for some real bass-heads, the action of two 250mm bass units will never be bass enough. Deep bass generates almost atavistic respect from some, and those people demand air to be moved, trouser legs to be flapped, and eyeballs to be pressed into their sockets. For them, the ability to play bass with space, pace, and grace is as nothing as being able to loosen fillings at 30 yards. It can reach 20Hz, but the TD725swMk2 will never hit their B-spot. But that shouldn't bother the rest of us, for whom bass is a simply a part of a greater musical whole.

Finally, from a sound quality perspective, how does the mk2 differ from its predecessor? Perhaps the biggest change brought about by the revisions is improved transient response (Eclipse TD learned a lot from its revised speaker range), and that results in even snappier leading-edge resolution than before, which is saying a lot. It's not a major change, and Mk1 owners will probably not feel the need to trade up, but the new and next generations of serious seekers of subwoofering now have a new champion in the TD725swMk2.

The Eclipse TD TD725swMk2 turns the loudspeaker world on its head. In most cases, integrating a subwoofer into a two-channel system means hoping that the sub can keep up with the main speakers. But with the TD725swMk2 in tow, it's the other way around, and there are many loudspeakers that hold back what the subwoofer is capable of. Very highly recommended! +

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Type: Side-firing, powered subwoofer with sealed enclosure.

Driver complement: Two 250mm Kevlar/Paper bass drivers with aluminium R2R support strut.

Inputs: Hi-level speaker input with multi-way speaker connectors, low-level input via single RCA jack, LFE input via RCA jacks.

Low frequency extension: 20Hz at -10dB

Amplifier power: 500W RMS

Controls: Crossover (30Hz – 150Hz), Level, Phase (0 or 180 degrees), Power (on/off). Front panel and remote control.

Dimensions (HxWxD): 500 x 545 x 524mm

Weight: 51kg

Finishes: Piano Black lacquer

Price: £5,100

Manufacturer: Eclipse TD

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