

KEF

LSX II LT WIRELESS SPEAKERS

AUD \$1,695 RRP



Not every audio company has been willing to get behind the “Give Me Convenience or Give Me Death” consumerist manifesto – but then it’s safe to say that KEF is not every audio company. Ever since its 1961 inception in Kent, England and latterly its acquisition by Hong Kong’s GP Acoustics International Ltd, it has been giving The People what they ask for, and often in quite some style.

Most recently, The People have been asking for wireless stereo speaker systems – or at least, those who want serious sound without having to jump through hoops have. And since the 2016 launch of the [LS50](#) Wireless system, KEF has been catering to them in fine style – so much so in fact, that its portfolio of wireless stereo speakers has expanded in all directions. The LS50 Wireless begat the [LS50 Wireless II](#), the [LS60](#) is a floorstanding alternative, and the smaller, more affordable LSX became the [LSX II](#).

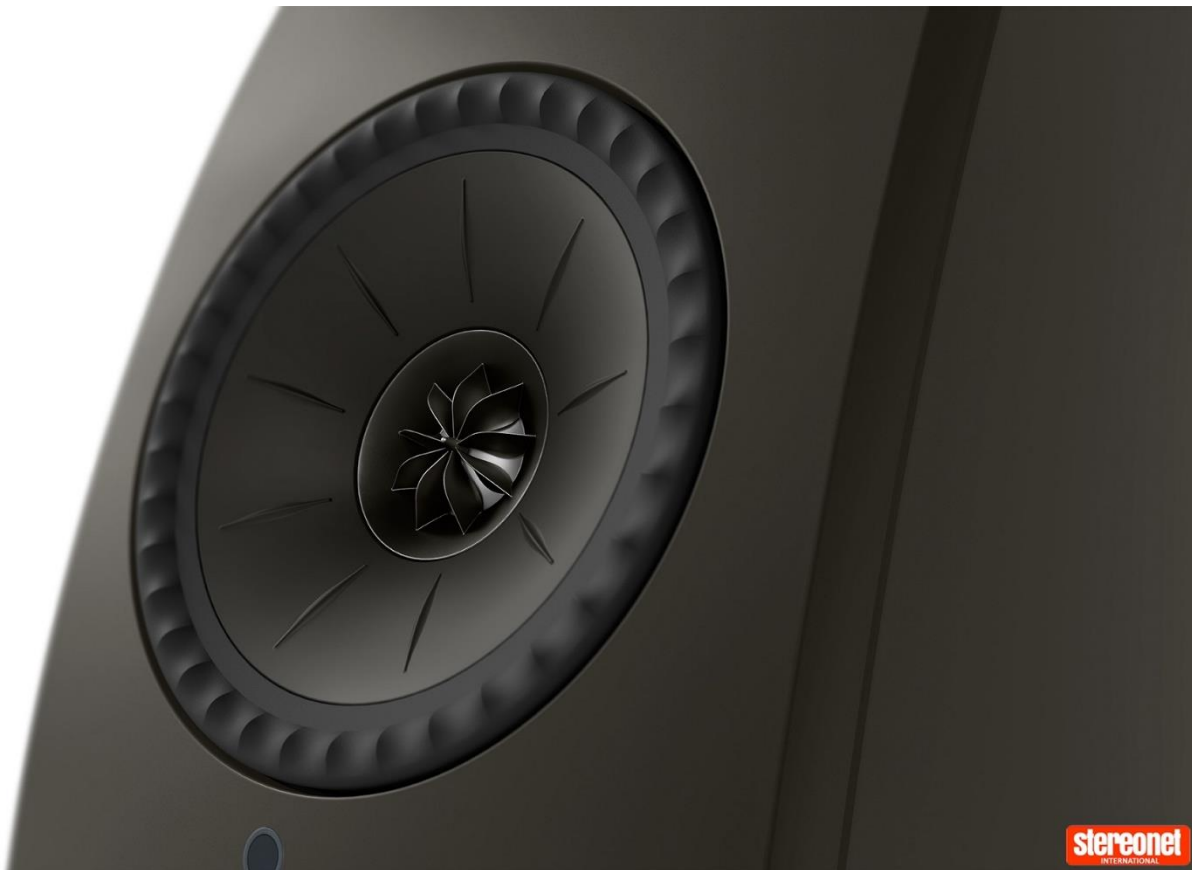
Now, presumably in an attempt to democratise its expertise as much as possible, KEF has launched the [LSX II LT](#). It’s a slightly stripped-down variation on the LSX II and is this brand’s most affordable wireless stereo speaker system so far.

UP CLOSE

When did you last clap eyes on a pair of KEF loudspeakers? If it has been since 1988, then the chances are that you'll be familiar with the company's so-called 'Uni-Q' driver arrangement. It's a coincident source driver, with a tweeter sitting in the throat of a mid/bass cone. The intention is to precisely position the acoustic centre of each unit to coincide. It is currently in its twelfth incarnation – or thirteenth if you count [2020's addition](#) of the British firm's '[metamaterial absorption technology](#)' to 2018's twelfth-generation arrangement.



For the LSX II LT though, it's the eleventh generation of Uni-Q that has been deployed. The tweeter is a 19mm aluminium dome positioned at the acoustic centre of a 115mm magnesium/aluminium mid/bass cone. Depending on room characteristics and the EQ settings required, this arrangement should be good for a frequency response of around 54Hz to 28kHz. Power is of the Class D variety, unsurprisingly. Each tweeter gets 30 watts with which to do its thing, while each mid/bass driver is in receipt of 70.



Naturally enough, there are wired and wireless options when it comes to getting digital audio content aboard the LSX II LT. Dual-band Wi-Fi means Apple AirPlay 2, Chromecast, Spotify Connect, TIDAL Connect and UPnP devices are all accessible, and the KEF Connect control app allows access to Amazon Music, Deezer, Qobuz and internet radio too. Bluetooth 5.0 connectivity is available, with SBC and AAC codec compatibility. The Ethernet socket on the rear of the 'primary' speaker offers optimum network stability, and there are USB-C and digital optical inputs available, with an HDMI ARC socket so your TV can join in the LSX II LT action. A pre-out for a subwoofer and a second USB-C output (used for making the necessary connection to the 'secondary' speaker) complete the line-up. You'll have noticed there's no analogue input of any description, which is a pity.



The KEF Connect app itself is at its most stable and useful here, and there are plenty of granular control options available, the ability to integrate the LSX II LT into a wider smart-home system, and plenty of EQ adjustment possibilities, as well as broader control of the system. KEF also supplies a little remote control handset with 'play/pause', 'skip forwards/backwards', 'volume up/down/mute', 'power on/off' and input selection controls for the traditionalists among us.



As you would expect, all mainstream digital audio file types are compatible with the LSX II LT, as well as some of the more esoteric alternatives. File resolution of up to 24-bit/384kHz can be sourced via the network connection, the USB-C and digital optical connections top out at 24-bit/96kHz, and the HDMI input can cope with 16-bit/48kHz stuff. No matter where it's coming from and at what resolution, it is resampled to 24-bit/96kHz in order to be delivered to the

'secondary' speaker via the supplied USB-C 'interspeaker' cable. But not before it's had the once-over from KEF's 'Music Integrity Engine' digital signal processing algorithms.

On the outside, each speaker is an eminently shelf-friendly 240x155x180mm [HxWxD] – stands and desktop 'pads' are support options if you're prepared to spend a little more. The speakers are basically visually identical to the design **Michael Young** came up with for the LSX II. This means that by prevailing standards, they're actually quite unorthodox as there are few parallel lines involved. Finishes extend to green ('sage'), grey ('graphite') or white ('stone').

THE LISTENING

It's only fair to give a high-resolution digital audio system some hi-res content to deal with, and indeed, the KEF LSX II LT sounds best when indulged to this sort of degree. A TIDAL-derived 24-bit/96kHz file of **Professor Longhair's** *Everyday I Have the Blues* gives the KEF ample opportunity to show what it's made of. And that turns out to be a combination of tonal fidelity, rhythmic positivity, surprising low-frequency extension and a straight-ahead musicality sufficient to turn every 'quick listen' into a long session.



From the bottom of the frequency range to the top, the KEF is an even-handed, neutral and natural-sounding system that doesn't stick its oar into the tonality of a recording too overtly. At the bottom end, there is surprising presence and substance, and plenty of variation and detail to go along with it. Not every compact loudspeaker with a modestly sized mid/bass driver can delve as deep or hit as determinedly as this one. Moreover, not every loudspeaker of any size controls the attack of bass sounds with such straight-edged determination. The KEF is insightful where texture and tonal variants are concerned, and it is able to express rhythms with absolute confidence.



Professor Longhair's baritone is strong and true during the course of this recording, but switching to a similarly hefty FLAC file of *Gloria: In Excelsis Deo* by **Patti Smith** is an even better showcase for the KEF's powers of midrange resolution. Her vocal line is absolutely alive with character and attitude, and the energy that's being expended as her singing becomes shouting is palpable. Not even the most transient aspects of her performance can elude the LSX II LT; consequently, the voice here is a compelling listen.



At the top end, there is brilliance without edginess and shine without hardness. Treble reproduction is really nicely judged, from the level of attack to the amount of fine detail carried along with the outright bite. The journey from the top to the bottom of the frequency range is a smooth ride, with nothing to distract from the unity of the KEF's presentation.

The dynamic contrasts found in **Fairport Convention's** *A Sailor's Life* are handled in a highly agile way. The song also benefits no end from the manner in which the LSX II LT lays out the soundstage – it may not be the largest you ever heard, but it is organised and controlled. There's a secure little area for every element of the recording, and due prominence is given to the spaces between them. At the same time, the KEF delivers the song as a cohesive whole rather than as a collection of isolated occurrences.



There's nothing showy about the way the LSX II LT handles music. Its slight understatedness actually serves almost every recording the system comes into contact with in a positive way. The ability to get out of the way of a recording is an underappreciated virtue in audio systems. However, this KEF is happy to let the music, rather than the electronics, do the talking. And it's not as sniffy as some when it comes to lower-resolution digital audio files, either. A Spotify stream of *Alone But Moving* by **Here We Go Magic** sent via Bluetooth in AAC isn't great, yet the KEF doesn't turn its nose up and instead endeavours to make the best of it.



The only aspect of its performance that isn't deserving of much praise is the scale of its sound or, rather, the lack thereof. No one should be surprised that small drivers inside cabinets of limited internal volume, driven by modest power amplification, struggle to fill larger rooms with sound – you can't beat the laws of physics. A small-to-medium-sized room is no problem, but anything bigger is a non-starter.

THE VERDICT

Everything is relative, of course. For example, is KEF's LSX II LT a match for the [Sonus faber Duetto](#) wireless stereo speaker system I reviewed for *StereoNET* a short while ago? Well. No, it isn't. But then again, the latter costs over four times its price, so the question really should be – is it worth its asking price? That's easy. The answer is undoubtedly yes, all day long.

