



HOME CINEMA SPEAKERS

# KRIX SERIES SX

The whole goal of home cinema is to achieve exactly what that phrase suggests — a cinema in the home. Not a big TV, not a soundbar that pretends to create surround sound — real home cinema which gets as close as possible to the quality of audio and video that is achieved in a real cinema.

And who might be best placed to deliver the sound component of home cinema to consumers? A company that makes real cinema sound systems would be well placed to adapt these to the smaller home environment, you might imagine. Indeed you don't have to imagine, because we have just such a company right here in Australia — Krix Loudspeakers.

### Equipment

Krix began life with founder Scott Krix designing horn loudspeakers in a garage, and selling kit speakers (which were delightfully tax-friendly back then) through a local retail store. But early on he was invited to solve an acoustics problem in the auditorium of the nearby Capri Theatre in Goodwood, South Australia, and his solution of an Infinite Baffle Wall was unique, never before used anywhere in the world. Word soon spread and over the next decade his company had installations in around 250 professional cinemas, and went on to install systems in theatres around the world. Today Krix products are in 60% (and rising) of Australian cinemas, and continue to be installed in theatres internationally. Krix remains at the cutting edge of cinema sound design — it worked closely with Dolby on the development of speakers for Atmos, for example, and installed some of the very first Atmos cinemas.

Krix also remains highly active in consumer hi-fi — its business is roughly equally split between home and professional audio. For some years it has had a crossover point between the two in its flagship home speakers, the Series X range — the 'X' stands (kinda) for Extreme. These are not suitable for putting on either side of your telly in the average Australian lounge! Series X has been designed for spare-no-expense home cinemas where only the best speaker systems will do — indeed some of the Series X models are adapted directly from the professional equivalent, varying mainly in finish rather than purpose. But aware that not everyone can have a room sufficiently large to accommodate the Series X, Krix has just released the 'Series SX' range — literally "scaled-down Extreme". More suitable for room sizes under eight metres, the SX range includes some of the Series X range (in the Megaphonix and Phonix models and the Cyclonix subwoofer), but provides additional smaller models and layout variations for more versatility of installation.

Rather than build an entire home cinema for this review, we travelled to Hackham, south of Adelaide, where Krix's Michael Cox laid on an SX demonstration for us in the company's latest Atmos-enabled theatre room (pictured above).

### Performance

The demonstration room for the SX system was not enormous — comparable with a home cinema room in which you might position four or six seats, and it was configured for a Dolby Atmos system of 7.1.4... that is, conventional 7.1-channel surround with four overhead speakers to deliver the extra dimension brought by the new Dolby Atmos height processing.



Same same but different — the Fanatix (left), Dramatix (centre) and Megaphonix (right) use the same drivers in different configurations to fit a variety of home cinema designs. Below left: the not insubstantial Cyclonix subwoofer in situ.

Perhaps the most surprising thing on entering was seeing the front Fanatix speakers, which appeared decidedly compact compared with the Krix Series X towers; indeed at less than a metre high, they were small enough to sit under the screen at the front of the room. Each Fanatix is a two-way design using a 10-inch paper-cone bass driver backed by a large 50mm voice coil, above which is the 26mm doped-fabric tweeter coupled to Krix's patented 90 x 40-degree short-throw horn, which assists even dispersion across the horizontal range.

Precisely the same components are available in the Dramatix model, and in the Megaphonix (which is a model that is part of both the SX and the Series X ranges), and again in the 'Megaphonix Flat'. Why so many similar speakers?

It's all about providing solutions for different custom theatres, explained Michael Cox. "That's the key to the whole SX range," he explained, "the different versions fit different requirements for custom theatre. So the Fanatix is the floorstander, and we do a version that goes into the wall, that's the Dramatix — it's got a faceplate that it sits in, and can go straight behind a screen, if it's acoustically transparent of course. And then we have a Megaphonix Flat, same as the Dramatix but it doesn't have the plate, so it mounts onto the wall or however you want to install it. Then we have the normal Megaphonix, which is actually part of our Series X range, and that's a wedge-shaped design with the same driver layout. So essentially same drivers, same waveguide, same cabinet volumes — but all laid out in different applications so they can fit however you want to install your home theatre."

The Megaphonix wedges are quite large, so Krix has also created two smaller sizes in the Ultraphonix and the Phonix. These drop the waveguide but retain the ferrofluid-cooled dome tweeter, the Ultraphonix having an eight-inch bass driver with a 38mm voice coil, and the Phonix using a 6.5-inch woofer with 33mm voice coil. Most of the SX range have forward-facing ports, since rear ports would be unsuitable for wall-mounted or in-wall speakers, of course, but these two port through the top of their wedge.



"Sub-wise we have two of our Cyclonix in here — obviously this is fairly full-on," chuckled Michael Cox as he leant on one of the two subwoofers in the room (below), each of which was 1.2 metres high, 67cm wide and 40cm deep, sporting a high-excursion 18-inch paper cone. Krix makes both active and passive versions of the Cyclonix, while there are, of course, smaller models in its consumer ranges, and Cox told us that "we're looking at something a little bit smaller, an 'inbetween' version" [later announced as the **Volcanix Slim**, reviewed here].

How did all this sound? Entirely spectacular, and so immersive that we found ourselves focusing as much on the material as the system. We started with music (on video), a Joe Bonamassa performance of 'High Water' at the Royal Albert Hall that features two drummers, one with sticks and one with tympani mallets. The impression of sheer air power emerging from the Krix SX system was breathtaking, a P.A.-level wall of sound, yet still with perfect cut-through for the guitar and vocal. This was especially impressive given the entire system was being driven through a Denon AVR-X5200, which can process 11 channels and power nine of them (a relatively modest two-channel power amplifier was running the two rear speakers in the room).

The effect of Dolby surround in using the SX speakers became apparent on the next track, Slow Dancing in a Burning Room from John Meyer's three-part LA concert 'From Where The Light Is', especially on raising the audience mikes above and around the listening position, while again the Krix system delivered both the impeccable delicacy of Meyer's opening guitar and a bass guitar so solid and real you can bet it was sounding better in the Krix room than it ever did at the concert.

Dolby's Atmos demo disc was next, which we know well, but had not heard at this level of reproduction. The 'prism' trailer delivered the closest to "in the room" sound we've yet heard from Atmos (which is experienced mainly as a dome of sound), with sound elements very close behind the listening position and then zooming to the front side, while those subwoofers provide their abilities during the 'Amaze' Atmos trailer — when the caption 'Powerful bass' appeared, it was more like wind than mere bass; we could swear the air pressure blew back our hair.

Movies followed; Transformers: Age of Extinction brought helicopters flying directly overhead, insecticons remarkably close to our ears, massive impact from missiles and gunshots, and some magnificent bass as the slo-mo moments kick in, though the very best moment for this effect came in 'Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles' when the shelled crusaders flip a giant truck over using, um, a stick. Suspension of disbelief is easy when a sound system is this good...

### Conclusion

For a real 'cinema sound' at home, it makes sense to use similar technology to the real thing, to get the experience as close as possible.

But why compromise on 'close'? The Krix Series SX range is the real thing, scaled down to fit within the constraints of the home. It proved monumental in its ability to deliver movie soundtracks at full throttle, yet delicate and sophisticated enough to play music at the heights of realism. Simply superb.

### Krix Series SX home cinema speakers

- + Massive performance; Delicacy in addition to scale
- For dedicated home cinemas only