

# KEF LSX II LT

## active stand-mount loudspeaker

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It's been nearly ten years since KEF whipped the covers off the LS50 Wireless - and since then, the company has consistently been there or thereabouts when it comes to high-performing, good-looking wireless audio systems in a pair of speakers. Most recently, I had the pleasure of giving house space to the LS60 Wireless system - which, at £4,499, proved to be very good value for money indeed, as (I hope) my **hi-fi+** review in Issue 235 made plain.

Of course, KEF is not the sort of company to ignore those customers for whom the LS60 Wireless is a bit much. The LS50 Wireless II, and the even more affordable LSX and LSX II, were all designed to cater for those of us who fancy a bit of uncompromised hi-fi performance without going too far into debt - and with this LSX II LT, KEF has delivered a pared-back, even less expensive variation on the LSX theme. The idea is to make KEF's expertise available to more customers than ever before - but it will only work as long as the company has managed to move down-market without, well... moving downmarket.

### Similarities

The LSX II LT is visually very similar to the pricier LSX II - and, for the avoidance of doubt, that's a good thing. 'Design' is something that's happened, which is not something you can say about most of KEF's similarly priced rivals. At a neat 240 x 155 x 180mm (HxWxD) per speaker, the LSX II LT will look at home on a shelf or desktop - and there are cost-option stands available too if you so desire. The available finishes (sage green, stone white, and graphite grey) only add to the decorative potential of this KEF system; the LSX II LT is visually mildly interesting and acoustically benefits from its relative lack of parallel lines.

There's further visual stimulation in the form of the 11th-gen Uni-Q driver arrangement fitted here. Higher up the food chain, KEF is on the 12th generation of this iconic layout, but the 19mm aluminium dome tweeter, which sits in the acoustic centre of a 115mm aluminium/magnesium mid/bass cone, seems ideal for the LSX II LT. There's 100 watts of Class D power for each array (30 for the tweeter, 70 for the mid/bass driver), and the resulting frequency response is claimed to be 54Hz-28kHz.

Each speaker has on-board amplification, but in every other respect they have the classic 'primary/secondary' relationship. The primary speaker handles all connectivity - it's fitted with dual-band Wi-Fi, so Apple AirPlay 2, Chromecast, Spotify Connect, TIDAL Connect and UPnP devices are all available. Bluetooth 5.0 connectivity is also present, with SBC and AAC codec support. There are further options for wireless streaming via the 'KEF Connect' control app, which grants access to Amazon Music, Deezer, Qobuz and internet radio.

Physical connectivity is on the rear of the primary speaker, beneath its tidy bass reflex port. There's an Ethernet socket for optimum network stability, along with USB-C and digital optical inputs. An HDMI eARC socket allows your TV to become part of your system, and there's a pre-out for a subwoofer as well.

A second USB-C output, used to connect the primary to the secondary speaker, is the final physical connection. KEF insists you use the cable it provides for this purpose, with dire (if unspecified) consequences hinted at for those who do not comply. This is one of the major differences, and a cost-cutting exercise, between the LSX II LT and its more expensive siblings - there is no option for the two speakers to communicate wirelessly.

### All the formats

Every worthwhile digital audio file format is supported, and file resolutions up to 24bit/384kHz can be handled via the network connection. 24bit/96kHz is available via the digital optical and USB-C inputs, while the HDMI ARC tops out at 16bit/48kHz. All digital files are resampled to 24bit/96kHz before they're shared with the secondary speaker, but not before KEF's 'Music Integrity Engine' digital signal processing algorithms have worked their magic.

There's a tidy little remote control handset provided as part of the system - it covers the major functions ('play/pause', 'skip forwards/backwards', 'volume up/down/mute', 'power on/off' and input selection), and looks and feels quite agreeable as it does so. The app, though, is where your granular control comes from - here's where you can finesse EQ settings, introduce your LSX II LT to your broader smart-home system, designate the primary speaker as the 'left' or 'right' channel, access your local media servers, integrate your favourite music streaming services, set volume limits and so on.



Despite the audible difference between participants, the LSX II LT presents the performance as a convincingly unified whole.

As far as performance goes, there are two things that need to be borne in mind when listening to the KEF LSX II LT – although to be fair, these are caveats that apply to almost every product of this size and type costing this sort of money. The first is that the system does its best work when given the best material to handle – properly high-resolution content from an appropriate music-streaming service (which rules out Apple Music and Spotify) or some network-attached storage is required to hear the LSX II LT to best effect. The other is that it's not about to fill larger spaces with sound - there are understandable constraints regarding outright scale and volume.

#### **A lot to like**

Bear these caveats in mind, though, and there's a lot to like about this little KEF system. A listen to a 24-bit/192 kHz FLAC of *Promises* by Floating Points, Pharoah Sanders and the London Symphony Orchestra [Luaka Bop] showcases the KEF's ability to create a fairly substantial soundstage despite its lack of outright scale, and to organise that stage really well - a recording like this, so full of spaces and silences, is laid out confidently and coherently. And despite the audible distance between participants, the LSX II LT presents the performance as a convincingly unified whole. >>



## EQUIPMENT REVIEW

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» There's plenty of dynamic potency on display, too, so even when a recording shifts from 'near-silence' to 'we have a full-on symphony orchestra and we're going to use it', the system is able to express the differences fully. Lower-level dynamic variations in harmonics receive the same sort of attention, too, so there's full expression of the disparities evident on a note-to-note basis.

The tonal balance from the top to the bottom of the frequency range is neutral and consistently maintained, and the KEF never overplays or understates any aspect of it – the journey from top to bottom is smooth and believable. Detail levels are high at every point, and the LSX II LT has numerous pertinent observations to make about the timbre and texture of instruments or voices at every turn. Once through a TIDAL stream of Timi Yuro's *Something Bad on My Mind* [Liberty], the point is made in some style: the system communicates eloquently through the midrange, so the remarkable voice has all its character and attitude, as well as its technique and timbre, made manifest.



### Impressive punch

Despite the speakers' compact dimensions and the power on tap, the KEF system delivers impressive low-frequency punch and substance. Bass sounds during a listen to *The Low End Theory* by A Tribe Called Quest [Jive] hit with respectably solid impact, dig reasonably deep, and are always well controlled and nicely shaped at the leading edge of notes or hits. As a result, the LSX II LT never has any problems expressing rhythms or handling tempos. The opposite end of the frequency range attacks with crisp determination, though without ever threatening to get edgy or hard, even if you like to listen at significant volume.

While there have been obvious measures taken to ensure the LSX II LT doesn't exceed its target price - the lack of wireless connectivity between speakers and the fairly glaring omission of any analogue inputs are chief among them - KEF has nevertheless done the right thing here. The LS range would now seem to be complete - and unless you're trying to fill a large space with sound or you have some analogue equipment you'd like to use, you should consider the LSX II LT a compulsory audition when considering a wireless all-in-two system at this sort of money. +

### Technical specifications

**Type:** Stand-mount loudspeaker system with integrated amplification, DSP, and wireless connectivity

**Driver complement:** Uni-Q 19mm vented aluminium dome tweeter within 115mm vented aluminium/magnesium mid/bass cone

**Amplification power (w)/type:** 100/Class D (30w per tweeter, 70w per mid/bass driver)

**Frequency response:** 54Hz-28kHz

**Inputs:** HDMI eARC; digital optical; RJ45 ethernet; 2 x USB-C (one for data transfer, one for connection between speakers)

**Wireless inputs:** dual-band Wi-Fi; Bluetooth 5.0; Apple AirPlay 2; Google Chromecast; UPnP; Spotify Connect; TIDAL Connect; internet radio

**Outputs:** subwoofer pre-out

**Digital audio sample rates:** up to 24bit/384kHz

**File types:** AAC; AIFF; ALAC; DSD; FLAC; LPCM; MP3; MP4; OGG; WAV; WMA; MQA

**Dimensions (HxWxD):** 24x15.5x18cm

**Weight:** 3.4kg per speaker

**Finishes:** Sage green; Stone white; Graphite grey

**Price:** £899, €999, \$999 per pair

**Manufacturer** KEF

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