

# Dancing on the...

Steve Withers gets a Lionel Richie earworm while checking out Klipsch's top-of-the-range Dolby Atmos upfiringers



Klipsch's two-way upfiringers feature 5.25in midbass units

**IMMERSIVE AUDIO HAS** made in-roads over the last few years, with Dolby Atmos (and to a lesser extent DTS:X) available on Blu-rays, games and streaming/broadcast TV. However if you want to enjoy some object-based action, at some point you're going to have to address the issue of overhead channels.

Dolby realised this from the start, so developed Atmos speakers in conjunction with a number of manufacturers. The idea is simple: you fire the audio upwards at an angle, bouncing it off the ceiling and down towards the listener. This creates the illusion that overhead channels are emanating from speakers above your head.

Klipsch's RP-500SA is just such a speaker and forms part of its Reference Premiere

range. It utilises the same 5.25in woofer and Tractrix horn tweeter as the rest of the lineup, but also includes Dolby's proprietary psychoacoustic wizardry. A pair sells for £575, with a choice of ebony or walnut finishes, and magnetic grilles.

## AV INFO

**PRODUCT:** Dolby Atmos elevation/surround speaker

**POSITION:** Premium upward-firing module

**PEERS:** KEF R50; Elipson Prestige Facet 6ATM

The speaker is more versatile than your average topper, with the option of a surround, height or upward-firing orientation. Depending on your speaker config, you simply flip the switch on the rear between Atmos or surround. There's a keyhole for wall-mounting, and binding posts are recessed for tidier cabling when placed atop another speaker.

The RP-500SAs were tested as part of a 5.1.2-channel system with a pair Klipsch's RP-6000F floorstanders. They fit comfortably on the towers but are fairly large, which might be an issue if you're positioning a second pair at the rear (which I'd recommend).

## Look up

The effectiveness of any upward-firing speaker is largely dependent on the ceiling: if it's low and reflective you're good to go, but if it's high, vaulted, or absorbent then you should probably look elsewhere. You also can't bounce low frequencies, so bear that in mind when setting the crossover (Klipsch suggests a minimum of 150Hz for the RP-500SA).

In the right environment these upward-firingers really deliver the overhead goods, with acoustic beams effectively reflecting off the ceiling to create the perception of overhead channels. These sounds are integrated with the other speakers in the

## SPECIFICATIONS

**DRIVERS:** 1 x 5.25in spun copper Cerametallic woofer; 1 x 1in Titanium vented tweeter with Tractrix horn  
**ENCLOSURE:** Sealed  
**FREQUENCY RESPONSE (CLAIMED):** N/A  
**SENSITIVITY (CLAIMED):** N/A  
**POWER HANDLING (CLAIMED):** 75W-300W  
**DIMENSIONS:** 173(w) x 188(h) x 284(d)mm  
**WEIGHT:** 3.6kg

**FEATURES:** Dolby Atmos certified Elevation speaker; switchable crossover between Dolby Atmos/surround use; keyhole mounting; ebony or walnut finish; removable magnetic grilles

soundstage, although since I was running a 5.1.2 system, they were concentrated at the front of the room.

I have a number of Atmos discs that I use for testing, all with scenes that employ the overhead channels extensively. *Goosebumps* (US Blu-ray) is a great example, particularly the scene where the Invisible Boy is on top of the car. You can hear his feet hitting the car roof above you, with the Klipsch speakers delivering each footstep with good precision.

Another excellent example of overhead vehicular action is found in *San Andreas* (UHD Blu-ray) where Ray (The Rock)'s daughter is trapped in a limo that's being slowly crushed. You can hear rocks hitting the roof and metal buckling, which adds a sense of claustrophobia. This scene also perfectly demonstrates the speakers' adept handling of midrange and higher frequencies.

I should stress that despite the Atmos badging, these speakers will work just as well with DTS:X soundtracks. To check this I popped on the new 4K release of *Hellboy II: The Golden Army*, and watched the early sequence where our heroes battle a monster during a storm. The sound of thunder rolls overhead and the accompanying torrential rain feels both detailed and immersive.

## High-end height

Klipsch's RP-500SAs are at the higher end of the upfiring price range. There are plenty of more affordable alternatives, including the KEF Q50A, Elipson's Prestige Facet 6ATM, and PSB's Imagine XA. However, if you're running a higher-end system, and especially if it's composed of Klipsch Reference Premiere speakers, the sonic results (and surround speaker function) are worth the extra outlay ■

## HCC VERDICT



**Klipsch Reference Premiere RP-500SA**  
→ £575 → [www.klipsch.co.uk](http://www.klipsch.co.uk)

**WE SAY:** Versatile speakers to be used as surrounds, heights, or upward-firing – object-based fun with the minimum of fuss.