

SECRETS

of Home Theater and High Fidelity review

**Krix Phonix, Epicentrix, KDX-M Speakers, and Seismix 5 Subwoofer
- August 2007**

“I was impressed by the precision of the imaging that they delivered ...”

BY LEE HOWER

“I was thoroughly impressed by this Krix system (...) a standout (...) easy to appreciate (...) excellent performance for the price.”

INTRODUCTION

Krix is an Australian speaker company that builds speakers for both the home theater and commercial cinema markets. They're the oldest speaker company in Australia (founded in 1974), and here in the US their consumer products are distributed by FDW Worldwide.

Secrets has previously reviewed several of their models, and I had the opportunity to evaluate a multi-channel system built around Krix's new Epicentrix center channel unit.

FEATURES & SETUP

The Krix 5.1 setup included the Phonix floorstanders for the front left/right, Epicentrix center, KDX-M monitors for the rear channel, and Seismix 5 subwoofer. Krix manufactures their speakers in-house in their own facilities in Australia.

The Epicentrix is Krix's flagship center channel and is intended to match the Phonix or Esoterix front channels. Both the Epicentrix and Phonix speakers are physically large units, and share the same complement of drivers though different three-way crossover networks.

The tweeter is a 1" dual concentric diaphragm (a.k.a. ring radiator) design from Vifa/Peerless. The midrange unit is a 5" coated paper driver, and the bass is handled by an array of four 5" coated paper drivers (different design

from the midrange units), all sourced from Peerless.

To give you a sense of scale, the Epicentrix is three feet wide and weighs over 50 pounds. In my home theater setup, I stand-mounted



the Epicentrix just below and approximately two feet in front of my wall-mounted projection screen.

The Epicentrix's drivers are not magnetically shielded for use adjacent to an older CRT-type display, but the cabinet seems sufficiently braced to place a digital display on top of the unit.

The Phonix units were placed approximately four feet on either side of the Epicentrix and slightly toed in to the listening area.

A pair of KDX-M bookshelf speakers were used for the rear channels. These are a two-way MTM design featuring a pair of 5" doped paper mid-bass drivers and a 1" fabric dome tweeter. I stand-mounted these to the sides and slightly behind the seating area for the purpose of this review.

Bass duties were handled by the Seismix 5 powered subwoofer. The Seismix 5 is a box subwoofer design and uses a 12" paper cone driver powered by a 400 watt amplifier. This amp has ample power (capable of peak output of 800W), and is also used in Krix's top-of-the-line 15" Seismix 7 subwoofer.

The Epicentrix and Phonix units reach a claimed low end response of 40 Hz and 30 Hz respectively. I tested the speakers both with full-range signals and also crossed over at 80 Hz to the subwoofer. Most of my listening was done full-range.

All of the speakers featured an Atlantic Jarrah wood veneer, with the Phonix and Epicentrix having a black painted front baffle. This wood, native to Australia, is a deep red in color similar to mahogany and I must admit that the veneers were very nicely done, though the flat black front baffles looked a bit plain by comparison.

All the speakers have removable grilles as well. Overall, the fit and finish of these Krix speakers is excellent.

THE SOUND

I listened to the Krix system in a wide range of settings, including two-channel audio, multi-channel audio, and movies.

For music listening, I mostly used the Phonix left and right channels in conjunction with the Seismix subwoofer. The Phonix units are nearly full-range and can be quite satisfying

on their own, though a sub helps with low bass whether listening to concertos or electronic music. I was impressed by the precision of the imaging that they delivered, as large full-range speakers often lack the imaging capabilities of monitors. In listening to various Vladimir Horowitz recordings, the Phonix speakers convincingly reproduced the grand piano in his bold style.

It took a little while to get output levels and placement just right, but the Seismix 5 provided ample output volume across the low bass range. The claimed frequency response reaches 16 Hz, and in watching Blade II and other reference material I've used for subwoofers, the Seismix seemed to deliver the goods. In conjunction with the bass output from the Epicentrix and Phonix units, the system handled the rolling thunder of artillery in the Dolby TrueHD soundtrack of the Letters From Iwo Jima HD-DVD with aplomb.

In multi-channel mode, the seamless blend and dynamic range from the front three channels in particular comes to the fore. Again, in Letters From Iwo Jima, there are a number of scenes with enveloping sounds coming from around the soundstage like bombing runs or ethereal nighttime footage. There was no audible "jumping" as these environmental sounds moved across the center channel.

The KDX-M speakers in the rear channels had reasonable tonal match, though they have different driver compliments than the Phonix and Epicentrix units up front. A system with another pair of Phonix speakers in the rear would be quite a sound to behold.

When watching the HD-DVD version of The Matrix, I was impressed by the dialogue clarity of the Epicentrix and channel separation of the system. In particular, in the scene where Neo and Trinity first meet in the club, the hushed conversation could be heard perfectly despite the pulsating metal soundtrack of Rob Zombie in the background. Overall, hearing this Dolby TrueHD soundtrack on the Krix speakers was a joy.

CONCLUSIONS

I was thoroughly impressed by this Krix system. For multi-channel home theater and audio settings, the Epicentrix is a standout center channel speaker and compliments the Phonix mains quite well. Listening to a

setup like this makes you wonder why more speaker manufacturers don't place greater emphasis on matching the output capability and tonal balance of all three front channels. Given the importance of the center in multi-channel home theater, it's easy to appreciate the Epicentrix and all its capabilities. This is especially so now that we don't place the center channel speaker on top of TVs anymore, and the HDTV flat panel units are getting so big.

At approximately \$9,000 for the entire system (each model available individually), these Krix speakers are not inexpensive, but offer good aesthetics and excellent performance for the price.

Specifications:

Phonix (floor-standing)

- Drivers: One 1" Tweeter, One 5" Mid-range, Four 5" woofers
- MFR: 30 Hz – 40 kHz
- Sensitivity: 90 dB
- Nominal Impedance: 4 Ohms
- Dimensions: 42" H x 9" W x 17" D
- Weight: 68 Pounds/Each
- MSRP: \$3,560/Pair

Epicentrix (Center Channel)

- Drivers: One 1" Tweeter, One 5" Mid-range, Four 5" Woofers
- MFR: 40 Hz – 40 kHz
- Sensitivity: 90 dB
- Nominal Impedance: 4 Ohms
- Dimensions: 9" H x 36" W x 14" D
- Weight: 53 Pounds
- MSRP: \$2,130 USA

KDX-M (Bookshelf)

- Drivers: One 1" Tweeter, Two 5" Mid/Woofers
- MFR: 50 Hz – 20 kHz
- Sensitivity: 89 dB
- Nominal Impedance: 6 Ohms
- Dimensions: 17" H x 7" W x 10" D
- Weight: 20 Pounds/Each
- MSRP: \$1,090/Pair USA

Seismix 5 (Subwoofer)

- Driver: 12"
- Low Frequency Response: 16 Hz
- Amplifier: 400 watts RMS
- Inputs: RCA Line-level, Speaker-level
- Dimensions: 18" H x 16" W x 17" D
- Weight: 66 Pounds
- MSRP: \$2,307 USA