

Klipsch ProMedia v.2-400 Speaker System

Produced By: Klipsch (<http://www.klipsch.com>)

Review By: Tim Maxwell

Overview: Behold the best PC speakers known to man.

Good Press: Three letters: THX; 400 earth-shattering watts of power; superlative sound quality—even at high volumes.

Bad Press: Audible hiss evident at high volumes; a power switch would have been handy.

Profile: PC Speaker System

System Requirements: Windows 95/98/NT; sound card with four speaker output recommended

Our Ratings:

Overall: 10/10

Ease of Use: 9/10

Compatibility: 10/10

Documentation/Tech Support: 9/10

Feel: 10/10

Value: 10/10

With the advent and continued popularity of four-speaker output sound cards and DVD video, it would be nice to see a set of truly sensational speakers to take full advantage of the technology. Yes, companies like Cambridge Sound Works have come along with some decent surround sound systems, but the definitive thought that continually pops into my head is that the speakers need more power. I want a set of speakers that shake wall-hangings and endanger my grandmother's fine china; I want a subwoofer that is monitored by the United States Geological Survey for seismic activity--and I want it all for under \$250. If you're anything like me, there is one and only one choice: the Klipsch ProMedia v.2-400 speaker system.

Who is Klipsch you ask? Well, a relative newcomer to PC speakers, but by no means to home audio. In fact, Klipsch has been a front-runner in loudspeakers for audio and home theater use since the company's inception back in 1946. The founder, Paul W. Klipsch revolutionized home audio when he invented the Klipschorn, the first product to allow near theatre-quality sound in the home. Now, over 50 years later, the company has once again revolutionized the audio world—this time, in the PC speaker industry.

Out of the box, the ProMedia v.2-400 is a five-piece set of sheer audio bliss. It consists of four larger-than-normal satellite speakers (two front and two rear) and a beefy subwoofer. The satellites pump out 60 watts of RMS each and the subwoofer comes in at a whopping 160 RMS. Do the math and you'll come up with an impressive 400 watts of total power—enough to rival many high-end home theatre systems. All of this extra horsepower allows sound that is clear of distortion, even at high volumes.

That said, we know that the ProMedias will keep noise ordinance officials busy, but what about sound quality? I have three very important letters for you: THX. THX is a highly-touted standard in sound patented by George Lucas and his team at Lucasfilm for use in movie theatres. As you can imagine, achieving THX-certification from the discriminating ears of Lucasfilm's engineers is quite a feat—especially for a set of home computer speakers. You're probably saying: this sounds great on paper, but how will they sound sitting on my computer desk? Fortunately, I ran these speakers through the ringer in all key areas of multimedia to answer that very question.

First-person shooters are always poster children for surround sound systems. With this in mind, I first popped in my newest gaming addiction *Unreal Tournament*. What followed was practically a religious

experience. Crank up the volume and bass, grab the Redeemer weapon, fire it, and you'll see what I mean. Equally impressive was the environmental audio with my *Sound Blaster Live!* card. There is no worse feeling in the world than hearing a rocket-launcher readying fire behind you as you scurry back to your base with the enemy flag. Every other game I threw at the ProMedias: *NHL 2000*, *Half-Life* and *FreeSpace 2* all produced similarly exquisite experiences. Whether you're playing *Quake 3* or *Solitaire*, I can't think of a game that would not sound better with these speakers.

My next order of business was to test the Promedias with a wide range of audio CDs. When I was finished, the only problem was determining how to get a fifty-disc CD changer in my computer. These speakers sound so much better than my current setup it's almost sick. From the sheer brilliance that is John Williams' *Star Wars* soundtracks, to the whiney, hip-hop riffs of Britney Spears, the sound quality was unparalleled. Heck, even my old Beatles collection (which were sampled poorly in the first place) sounded great.

There are only a couple of very minor problems I can see with these speakers. A big topic of discussion on Klipsch's message board has been the audible hissing problem. If the ProMedias are turned up over half way, the hiss is noticeable and can be annoying. The simple solution is to turn down the speakers when they're not in use (i.e. if you're just surfing the web). Hissing is not a problem when playing games or listening to music, so to me, this problem is a non-factor. Another minor quibble is the lack of a power switch. Again, to me, this isn't an issue because my whole computer setup is attached to a surge protector. Supposedly, the speakers are "smart" enough to go into sleep mode after extended periods of non-use, but for some, this still could be a problem.

Overall, I have a hard time finding significant fault with these speakers. The sound quality is unparalleled, the clarity is unmatched, and the sheer power is just plain awesome. Out of nowhere, Klipsch has significantly raised the bar in the PC-speaker market and has set the price such that you won't need to take out a loan to afford them. For \$250, I can't think of a better way to enhance your multimedia experience. Even if you're one of the unfortunate few that doesn't yet have a sound card that supports four speakers, you'll still enjoy superb sound quality. To put in bluntly, if you're in the market for new PC speakers, these are the ones to have, period.