



# The contender

There's probably never been a better time to buy a budget standmount speaker, but is the R-60M the one? **David Vivian** finds out

**T**his is encouraging. There appears to be a kind of death match smack down happening in the affordable standmount arena that's shattering preconceptions of what can be bought for around £400-£500. True, you don't even need to spend that much to secure a decent pair of budget boxes these days, but circa £500 seems to have become the new inflection point for a serious escalation in bang-for-buck value. A recent entrant – Elac's much admired Debut 3.0 DB63, at just under £400 – is seeking to reset the standard yet again, daring rivals from KEF, Monitor Audio, Wharfedale, DALI, Triangle, Q Acoustics, Fyne Audio *et al* to do better. The great news is that the

battle to build the most potent budget banger continues apace. Evidence comes from America's Klipsch – self-proclaimed 'keeper of the sound' and, it must be said, what could be the highest number of letter-led model name permutations in the history of hi-fi. Up for review here is the R-60M, the latest, largest and priciest member of its 'affordable Reference' trio, which also includes the R-50M and R-40M. Priciest maybe, but its £425 tag is right on the money for budget-sector stardom. The Reference Series first saw the light of day in 2014 and proudly lands the four principles of speaker design Klipsch holds dear: controlled directivity, high efficiency with low distortion, wide dynamic range and

**DETAILS**  
**PRODUCT**  
 Klipsch R-60M  
**ORIGIN**  
 USA  
**TYPE**  
 2-way standmount loudspeaker  
**WEIGHT**  
 7.8kg  
**DIMENSIONS**  
 (WxHxD)  
 203 x 400 x 336mm  
**FEATURES**  
 • 25mm aluminium Kapton dome tweeter/Tractrix horn  
 • 160mm TCP spun copper mid/bass driver  
 • Quoted sensitivity: 93.5dB/1W/1m (8ohm)  
**DISTRIBUTOR**  
 Henley Audio  
**WEBSITE**  
 klipsch.com  
 henleyaudio.co.uk

flat frequency response, assets intended to tap into that ever-popular combination of high performance and affordability. The latest 4th generation models boast a series of enhancements, including Spun-Copper Thermoformed Crystalline Polymer (TCP) bass drivers – the company's exclusive 90°x90° Tractrix horn tech. The first and most obvious impression is of a strapping MDF box with 20mm panels weighing a beefy 7.8kg and measuring 400mm tall by 203mm wide but a very generous 336mm deep. Dainty stands needn't apply. A new internal bracing design is said to help reduce cabinet vibration, in turn reducing colouration and improving accuracy. Whip off the magnetically attached grilles and all the familiar, handsome Klipsch R-family assets shine right back: the distinctive, edge-to-edge Tractrix horn blooming out from a deep-set 25mm aluminium Kapton 'Linear Travel Suspension' tweeter; the 160mm spun-copper TCP mid/bass driver glowing softly underneath. Apart perhaps from KEF's Uni-Q array, we doubt there's a more impressive-looking driver array at or anywhere near the price. Less obvious at first glance is the steeper angle of the TCP driver's cone, a development taken from Klipsch's Reference Premiere range and said to improve smoothness, accuracy and

transparency. Tractrix tech figures again round the back, informing the shape of the two-way design's bass reflex port. The single binding posts below are functional rather than fancy and, thankfully, not tricked up to look more expensively engineered than they are. Same goes for the black-only 'scratch resistant' vinyl wood grain-textured cabinet wrap, which is as smart as it needs to be and nothing more, and clearly hasn't used up much of the build cost. The drivers are the eye candy so, with the R-60M in situ at a distance, you're not distracted by the cabinet finish.

## Sound quality

As marketing slogans go, 'keepers of the sound', while as portentous as any, is perhaps more helpful than most. 'The sound', as protected by Klipsch, must have certain qualities: dynamism, presence, energy, speed, attack and proper foundational bass – most of all, the kind of immediacy associated with live performance and less the even-handed hi-fi metrics rooted in smoothness, refinement and neutrality. In the company's Reference ranges over the years, these characteristics have been so enthusiastically expressed as to polarise opinion, making the 'Klipsch sound' a classic Marmite proposition. More recently, though, the forcefully forward, all-action presentation loved by some and avoided by others, has been modified for a less peppery outcome. All the original punchy ingredients are present and correct,



The latest Klipsch Reference standmount enters a crowded sector, so there's no shortage of choice. A little pricier but rather smaller is B&W's excellent 607 S3 (HFC 511). Like the Klipsch offering, it puts musical communication ahead of ticking hi-fi boxes. It doesn't have the largess and bass heft of the R-60M, but sounds a little tauter and images just as well. If one doesn't quite hit the sweet spot, the other almost certainly will.

but the seasoning has been revised for a slightly richer, smoother balance seeking wider appeal. And that's exactly where we are with the R-60M. It sounds large, assured, dynamic and exciting in the manner of its 'R' badged predecessors with a full, well-extended yet agile bass. But what some identified as the

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slightly tense feeling of old, of being on the edge of shouty, has gone. Because the sound is blander? Not in any negative sense. Playing a CD of Eels' hard-rocking *Souljacker* album – especially the gloriously grungy, over-driven and distorted title track – what would have been almost unlistenable on an older Reference standmount just sounds enjoyably raw and raucous on the R-60M, Mark Oliver Everett and cohorts solidly located in a spaciouly proportioned and layered soundstage – again giving a healthy swerve to contrived couth and refinement but, crucially, staying musically literate and in step with the momentum and stark dynamic contrasts of the performance. The midband is mildly forward, but clear and informative with good attack – especially on strings and brass. Herb Alpert's sublime performance of Burt Bacharach's theme tune for the James Bond spoof *Casino Royal* is a riot of rasp and ripe resonance. Treble, too, benefits from better integration than before.

Transparent and open, there's plenty of energy, air and good tonal shading but, despite the potential of the Tractrix horn to project, nothing sounds too in-your-face or blown out of proportion. A deep seam of rhythmic snap and impetus is a welcome carry over from previous Reference Series designs, the R-60M nailing anything with a groove and never found wanting for pace and involvement, core talents that invariably bring a dimension of fun and vitality to up-tempo material.

## Conclusion

There's still a whiff of the maverick about this latest Reference Series standmount and the points of difference presented by the horn-loaded tweeter and copper-spun main driver are an undoubtedly potent draw. The best news, however, is a more comfortably upholstered sonic performance that nevertheless retains the dynamism and bold presence that Klipsch has become famed for. Something of a win-win, then ●

## Hi-Fi Choice

**OUR VERDICT**

**SOUND QUALITY**  
★★★★★

**VALUE FOR MONEY**  
★★★★★

**BUILD QUALITY**  
★★★★★

**EASE OF DRIVE**  
★★★★★

**OVERALL**  
★★★★★

**LIKE:** Scale; dynamics; bass; excitement; build and finish

**DISLIKE:** Quite large and hefty for a standmount

**WE SAY:** In the circa £500 standmount battleground, the R-60M more than holds its own