Retro Elegance

By Bob Ankosko

Hands on
Klipsch • Three Wireless Music System

PRICE $400

F I ’ M NOT GONNA LIE. WHEN I FIRST saw a press photo of the Three, I was immediately taken with its elegant mid-century design legacy of its late founder Paul W. Klipsch, the “mid-century” design of a number of its matching wireless products from Klipsch.

I’m not the only one of many examples I’ve been impressed by how clean, full, and detailed Suzanne Vega’s “Luka” (Delicate Shouting) sounded on one of my favorite internet stations, Radio Swiss Pop. The Three conveyed the liveliness of Vega’s vocals with just the right amount of ambience. While the song was playing, I switched to Tidal (HiFi version) and searched for “Luka” so I could compare the sound, which turned out to be noticeably brighter on Tidal—maybe too bright.

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But it’s official. 3D TV, once heralded as the future, is now officially only to be referred to in the past tense. Please adjust your vocabulary accordingly. This news is not surprising. In fact, you are probably only surprised in that you assumed 3D’s demise had occurred years ago. When the last time you watched a 3D Blu-ray? Well, there you go.

Last year, two major manufacturers still supported 3D TV. This year, they do not. LG and Sony pulled the plugs on their 3D TVs. Samsung, the world’s largest TV manufacturer, saw the writing on the wall a year ago and abandoned 3D, as did Vizio, Sharp, Panasonic, and others. No major TV manufacturer makes a 3D TV anymore. 3D is over.

The brief rise of 3D TV can be attributed to the 2009 movie, Avatar. Wildly popular in movie theaters, particularly in 3D form, it convinced other movie-makers to shoot in 3D. Broadcasters optimistically launched their own 3D channels. All this convinced TV manufacturers to embrace 3D TV. This was not a good decision. Why did 3D TV fail? Ah, let me count the ways.

When a format fails, X number of people get left in the lurch. Next time something new comes along, they remember getting burned and decide to wait and see. So this type of failure is never good for business. But if there is any silver lining to the 3D debacle, it is this: At least 3D discs are still watchable, and 3D TVs can still be viewed in 2D. Bottom line: Consumers paid extra for a feature that has fallen out of favor. So, it could have been worse.

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Why did 3D TV fail? Let me count the ways.

Now that new 3D TVs aren’t being made anymore, the spigot on 3D content will slowly be closed. Time and technology have passed 3D by, acronyms such as OLED, HDR, and 4K/ UHD now drive sales. 3D is stagnated to the extent that manufacturers apparently don’t even have faith in a potential 3D 4K OLED TV. Ironically, these technical improvements let content look terrific, in a way that’s far more realistic than the supposed realities of 3D.

Speaking of realism, it is also ironic that 3D is leaving just as virtual reality is coming. If you thought people looked goofy wearing 3D glasses, just you wait.

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