

REL HT/1205

REL's new Serie HT dedicated home cinema subwoofer range gets a big boost with a big brother. **Richard Stevenson** meets the 500W, 12in HT/1205



YOU COULD HEAR a sharp intake of breath from subwoofer aficionados when REL announced its home theatre-centric Serie HT. Gone was the signature REL high-level input, long considered a USP of the brand's product stable. So what was on offer? A simple filter network, a budget finish and a promise to deliver a big bang for very few bucks.

I rather liked the entry-level HT/1003 [see HCC #286]. At just £500, its punchy 300W Class D amplifier, 10in CarbonGlas woofer and compact sealed cabinet brought home the value LFE bacon.

Scaling the design into a larger cabinet, boosting power to 500W and deploying a 12in driver is an obvious step up. This is what REL has done with its HT/1205, which comes to the table at just £700.

Tipping the scales at just shy of 20kg,

the HT/1205 is no lightweight, and its 40cm cubic shape, textured vinyl wrap and shiny top-plate make for a serious yet understated aesthetic.

Custom designed by REL, the front-facing 12in CarbonGlas cone is said to be super-light and super-rigid. Those are the magic ingredients for fast transient

attack and a tight sound. The soft butyl rubber roll-surround is a REL hallmark, offering long-throw excursion while remaining flexible for donkey's years.

The sealed cabinet design adds back-pressure to the cone movement, further keeping the output drum-tight but lacking the port-assisted bass gain of open designs. That is overcome by throwing power at the problem.

The 500W Class D amplifier here is also a REL design, dubbed NextGen5, and said to be cool-running and compact enough to allow for plenty of internal cabinet volume. The upshot is a claimed 22Hz (-6dB) frequency response and the ability to go party-loud. 'Warn the neighbours,' suggests the company.

Compared to more traditional RELs, the HT/1205's rear panel looks near-deserted. There are just two switches (On/Off/Standby, and 180-degree phase), and knobs for level and crossover. Inputs are just two phonos with unfiltered loopthrough, although REL's funky little HT-Air unit will give you wireless connectivity for a further £100.

Scarlett fever

Cutting to the chase (scene), the HT/1205 delivers an astonishing level of home cinema thunder for the money. If you want big LFE without dipping into four-figure sub territory, this is a smart place to look. On the flip side, the HT/1205 was clearly playing hooky the day subtlety circuits were being handed out.

SPECIFICATIONS

DRIVE UNITS: 1 x 12in CarbonGlas long-throw bass driver **ENCLOSURE:** Sealed **FREQUENCY RESPONSE (CLAIMED):** Down to 22Hz (-6dB) **ONBOARD POWER (CLAIMED):** 500W Class D amplifier **REMOTE:** No **DIMENSIONS:** 376(w) x 405(h) x 399(d)mm **WEIGHT:** 19.2kg

FEATURES: 2 x LFE line-level inputs; 2 x loopthrough outputs; 180-degree phase switch; automatic standby option; compatible with REL HT-Air Wireless transmitter; NextGen5 amplification; feet threaded for spikes

With Scarlett Johansson diving into the Dolby Atmos-fuelled festival opening fight sequence in *Ghost in the Shell* (Blu-ray), the HT/1205 is in its element. Gunfire thumps into your chest with a percussive feel and the subwoofer never seems to lose its grip even at serious volumes. My main speakers went into HF compression long before the HT/1205 was done, inspiring some enthusiastically LFE-biased level-matching on my AV rig.

That in itself led to seeking out *The Expendables 3* on Blu-ray. I love the dockyard scene where our heroes see Stonebanks (Mel Gibson) for the first time. Gunfire from ten different types of weapon (including a rocket launcher), explosions and toppling cargo containers see the LFE channel on fire and the HT/1205 does not disappoint. It is fearsomely dynamic with a sledgehammer punch around 50Hz-60Hz that can take your breath away. It's taught rather than boomy and delivers bass fun in spades.

The escape sequence in *Skyfall* (Blu-ray) shows up the HT/1205 as a little gung-ho for subtler effects. The low bass beat throughout the beginning is designed to replicate Bond's rising heartbeat as he realises Silva has escaped. By the time 007 is running through the tube station, the beat is a fast-tempo rhythm. Here, the HT/1205 lacks the refinement of woofers like REL's own T7i [HCC #277] and the LFE is a little more 'one-note' than ideal. Backing down the gain softens the effect, but also robs the HT/1205 of some of its visceral edge when the action starts.

Perhaps I'm guilty here of demanding too much, though. Despite its absence of true LFE subtlety, there should be no doubt that the HT/1205 is a bass-making bargain, and it offers a notable upgrade over the smaller HT/1003 for just £200 more ■

AV INFO

PRODUCT: 12in, 500W sealed cabinet subwoofer

POSITION: Above REL's HT/1003, below the T7i

PEERS: KEF Kube12b; REL T7i; Elipson Prestige Facet SUB10

HCC VERDICT



REL HT/1205

→ £700 → www.rel.net

WE SAY: Enormously powerful for the cash, REL's neat-looking HT/1205 delivers outstanding bang per buck, but don't expect too much subtlety.