



Tangerine dream

REL's T/9x subwoofer gets a multicoloured Special Edition makeover. Living basshead **Richard Stevenson** checks it out

While *Paint It Black* might be the best rock track to summarise subwoofer cosmetics, REL's new Special Edition T/9x is way more 'prog'. It's available in Italian Racing Red, Le Mon Yellow and the punchy orange Tangerine Dream.

A £150 premium on a standard T/9x in black or white gets you a bold new colour makeover, larger, triple-chrome-plated feet and a chrome badge. Flourishes of carbon automotive styling abound, including the neat carbon border to the REL badge on top and the main driver's super-light carbon cap.

The squat box, with radiused corner verticals, is hefty and its braced MDF construction houses a front-facing 250mm carbon fibre-coned driver. A downward-facing 250mm composite cone driver acts as an ABR.

Driving is courtesy of a Class A/B mono amp boasting 300W and the analogue theme continues to REL's proprietary filtering electronics. There is no DSP, EQ or app control

here. That automotive-style theme straight out of the manual gear stick and zero ABS or traction control era. This is also reflected in the all-analogue input collection, comprising REL's preferred high-level stereo input via a Neutrik connector and single RCAs for line and LFE. The latter bypasses the analogue filter circuit to push movie bass management to the AVR.

Add in analogue control pots for volume, crossover frequency and phase, and the whole design is like a shrunk version of the brand's well-received Carbon Special, and less than half the price. Setup is equally analogue and manual, and easy to get wrong. Hefting the T/9x SE about the room to find a sweet spot, reaching around the back to twiddle knobs (usually the wrong one because you can't see what you're doing) and dialling it into the speakers is wholly old school and requires perseverance and/or experience. A word of caution: a sub's sweet spot is almost guaranteed to be the least convenient position in the entire room.

Sound quality

Hooked up line-level to the sub-out of a Marantz M1 streamer/amplifier, the T9/x SE comes across as rich, deep and weighty. The central carbon driver is lightning fast to deliver a solid transient drum thwack, with the depth and body filled in by the ABR. Playing Led Zeppelin's *Moby Dick*, the two drivers offer a detailed, warm and rhythmic sound, albeit feeling a little held back in dynamics by the ABR's rather pudgier output.

Switching to the sub's high-level input, piggybacking the M1's speaker terminals, very much proves that you should always go with what the manufacturer recommends first. It makes for much easier ear-base integration with Q-Acoustics' 5040 standmount and immediately tightens up the room bloom. It sounds at its best in a corner and the whole bass spectrum gets a large shot of adrenaline speed and dynamics.

The well-recorded electronica of Hedegaard's *Ratchets* thunders into the room with impressive scale. The T/9x SE gets into its stride with room-shaking power that allows the infectious beat to command the track. It pressurises our 24m² room exceptionally well with a solid leading-edge punch to the bass notes.

The T/9x SE's real sonic strengths lie in its seamless integration into the mix. We've tested numerous subs that can hit harder and sound stunning for four tracks before they get fatiguing. The REL, set up sweetly, increases the ambience and feel of the music from the bottom to the top of the spectrum.

Conclusion

With its stunning colour options and analogue ability, the T/9x SE is in a class of its own. Setup requires a lot of fiddling and there is no remote for easy mid-session volume adjustment. Yet, like the classic cars that the colour options pay tribute to, the experience is organic, analogue bliss ●

DETAILS

PRODUCT
REL T/9x SE

ORIGIN
UK/China

TYPE
Subwoofer

WEIGHT
20.6kg

DIMENSIONS (WxHxD)
370 x 340 x 393mm

FEATURES
● 250mm carbon fibre driver
● 250mm down-firing ABR
● 300W Class A/B amplifier

DISTRIBUTOR
REL UK

WEBSITE
rel.net

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY



LIKE: Colour; finish; seamless analogue system integration

VALUE FOR MONEY



DISLIKE: Very manual setup and control; finicky room positioning

BUILD QUALITY



WE SAY: Exceptional analogue bass in very fancy clothes

FEATURES



OVERALL

