

Subwoofers of the Year

REL Britannia 3B
\$1995
sumikoaudio.net



In our view, the best subwoofers operate invisibly. They should be indistinguishable as a source and create the illusion that the main loudspeakers have merely gained an octave or so of low-frequency extension. Although REL subwoofers have always been good at this, the Britannia B3 is the best REL we've heard to date. Although it's a reflex system, you'd hardly know it—there's little response lag and no chuffing, suspicious pulsations, or overhang. What this means, beyond mere extension, is pitch definition that describes musical details that you wrote off as missing-in-action years ago. Credit the heavily braced enclosure and some savvy port design for the quiet cabinet. The essentially colorless tonal signature of the Britannia B3—the most compact in the Britannia line, though still by no means tiny—will make your existing speakers more of what you always hoped they could be. If you own a compact two-way, for example the B3 will make you believe you now own a fully integrated three-way speaker system. Integration is the key, and the REL system employs a series of 24 fine/coarse low-pass adjustments to optimize the blend with existing speakers. Hewing to REL tradition, there is no high-pass filter, so those expecting to boost the dynamic output of their main speakers will be disappointed. But this loss is minor compared to what is gained in the sheer pleasure of realizing how much more music you'll now be hearing. (Reviewed by NG, Issue 163)

