

REL Gibraltar G2 subwoofer

By Alan Sircom

Eleanor Roosevelt famously said 'do one thing everyday that scares you.' There's not much in hi-fi that's genuinely scary, except perhaps trying to cue up a really expensive cartridge while drunk and wearing a big sweater. But the Gibraltar G2 subwoofer... now that's a scary proposition. It's big and heavy and powerful, and it comes with a front panel red LED read-out that can tell you just how low or loud it is going. It can easily do both. Fortunately, it can be as refined as it is insane.

The G2 is a large, curved chunk of gloss black, with contrasting brushed alloy back panel and feet and a 250mm long-throw carbon fibre bass cone behind the front facing grille. It's no shrinking violet, as it takes up about as much space as a 28" CRT television (remember them). Except it weighs more. Inside is a 450W class AB MOSFET power amplifier (no Class D here) and the fastest filters in town, and a set of controls and connections. REL supplies all its subs with a 10m high-level-Neutrik Speakon connector, which is designed to connect the sub to the speaker terminals of your amplifier and LFE inputs for AV (you can use both). You can even stack them and a bold few have a floor-to-ceiling REL basstravaganza.



What's missing from the back panel is a great deal of control surfaces. In fact, the G2 has little more than a mandatory on-off switch next to the plug socket, because all the controls are removed to the hockey puck remote control handset. This controls crossover frequency, volume level and phase, plus a battery saving, make sure the kids don't mess up your settings toggle switch to lock the remote. As the LED read-out will tell you what you are altering when you are altering it, you can adjust easily from the listening chair.

There's two ways of setting up; earthmover, and the right way. As this sub can deliver bass you can feel in your retinas, unless you share a house with the ghost of King Tubby, not much is going to compete with the G2 when its dials are set to 'thermonuclear'. And you will do this.

Enjoy it; let your inner bass-nut out for a while, then set the sub up properly when you are all better. Just don't use the G2 as a weapon; a row with your better half is not improved by slamming the sub into high gear and putting Dub Syndicate on repeat – been there, done that, it ends messy. ▶



▶ Fortunately, when you've finished playing with the G2, it has as much grace as it does brute force. It also has one of the best manuals in audio, and unless you struggle to understand the controls on a kettle, the G2's manual will guide you painlessly through the whole process. The secret here is turning the subwoofer near a corner and turning it lower (in frequency and level) than you might expect. The best pieces of music to determine how best to set the system up include a *capella* female voices. What you should be listening for is the subwoofer kicking in at the point where the loudspeakers are running out of steam, but not to the point where the subwoofer can be easily heard filling in those blanks. As a result of this bass control and reinforcement, midrange and treble sounds appear free from the physical constraints of the loudspeakers, as if the speakers became more like point sources. There's a spot on the dials where the sound 'snaps' into sounding right; this is clear, obvious and immediately understood by the listener. The front LED read-out is an advantage here, because if you know broadly where the speakers stop, it's a good starting place for the subwoofer; better still, with remote in hand, you can set this correctly at the listening position.

When properly installed, it's almost impossible to describe the G2's sound, without describing the speaker it's being used with. The simple explanation is "your speakers, but better!" And it's that absence of its own voice that sets the G2 apart from most subwoofers, other RELs included. The point of a sub used to control the bass in a room and to reinforce the sound of the loudspeakers is for it not to have any intrinsic character of its own. Others – including others in the same stable – get very close, but this lives up to that ideal.

The concept of subwoofer reinforcement is forever misunderstood. Set up properly, the G2 isn't about adding bass, it's about controlling it. This is a concept common to all REL subs since the early days, but in the G2, there's so much control on tap, it's as much about room acoustics as it is



about bass reinforcement. Yes, it can be set to stun little animals at 30 paces, but when its powers are used for good, the Gibraltar G2 can be a remarkably deft and precise improver of all audio systems. You might need to read this line a couple of times for it to make sense and sink in, but the G2 doesn't make its presence felt more forcefully than other subwoofers and as a result is very highly recommended! +



TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Type: Closed box, front firing woofer

Drive Unit: 250mm long throw, carbon fibre cone

Lower Frequency Response in Room: -6dB at 18Hz

Input Connectors: High-Level Neutrik Speakon, Low-Level stereo phono, LFE phono, LFE XLR

Output Connectors: High-Level Neutrik Speakon, LFE phono, LFE XLR

Gain Control Range: 80 dB

Power Output: 450 Watts (RMS)

Ultra High-Current Power Supply

Phase Switch: Yes, 0 or 180 degrees

Amplifier Type: Class AB

Dimensions (WxDxH, including feet): 50.9x41.7x61cm

Weight: 38.1kg

Price: £2,499

Manufactured by: REL Acoustics Ltd

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