

# REL HT/1003 MKII

REL has upgraded its HT range of home cinema-focused subwoofers, but do they live up to their catchy nicknames?

Steve Withers finds out

**REL HAS LONG** touted its ability to make subwoofers that work equally well with music and movies – but if you're only interested in home cinema, the HT Series is for you. This range is specifically designed to slot into a multichannel speaker system, dropping the high-level Neutrik Speakon connectors to concentrate on LFE signals from an AV processor or receiver.

The three subs in the HT Series have been given various upgrades, with the top-of-the-line HT/1510 Predator II now using 1,000W of Class A/B grunt to drive its 15in CarbonGlas driver (see *HCC* #333). The other two subs in the lineup also get the sequel treatment, with the mid-range HT/1205 MKII (aka The Cannon), and the entry-level HT/1003 MKII (aka The Hammer), featuring new cabinetry, updated NextGen5 Class D amplification, and a host of tweaked filters for better bass response.

The £699 HT/1003 is for home cinema fans with restricted space and limited budgets. Its redesigned compact cabinet (36cm wide approx) has curved corners and is clad – mostly – in a line-grained matt black composite; the top panel is immaculately

finished in piano black lacquer. The build quality is top-drawer, even if I question the logic of a reflective top on a product designed for blacked-out environments.

Setup is nice and straightforward, with a level control, a dial for selecting a roll-off between 30Hz and 200Hz, and a switch



**HOME CINEMA CHOICE RECOMMENDED**

for choosing a phase of 0 or 180 degrees. Connections are simple low-level stereo and LFE phono inputs, along with outputs for daisy-chaining. There's also the option of adding REL's HT-Air wireless system for a cable-free installation, but no fancy EQ, calibration or app-based control features.

The HT/1003 MKII's sealed enclosure lends it an overall bass presence that feels tight and



## SPECIFICATIONS

**DRIVE UNITS:** 1 x 10in CarbonGlas front-firing long-throw driver **ENCLOSURE:** Sealed **FREQUENCY RESPONSE (CLAIMED):** Down to 24Hz (-6dB) **ONBOARD POWER (CLAIMED):** 300W (RMS) **REMOTE CONTROL:** No **DIMENSIONS:** 362(w) x 343(h) x 387(d)mm **WEIGHT:** 15.5kg

**FEATURES:** NextGen5 Class D amplifier; low-level stereo RCA and LFE RCA inputs; daisy chain low-level stereo RCA and LFE RCA outputs; level control; 30-200Hz crossover; 180-degree phase switch; automatic standby option; compatible with HT-Air wireless system

### REL's 10in driver is a glass fibre/carbon fibre combo

controlled, and the driver and amp deliver a one-two punch that's crisp, powerful and responsive. Running through my usual LFE testers, the sub handles deep notes with poise, and more rhythmic bass elements with a surprising tunefulness considering it's primarily designed for movie night.

Speaking of which, the HT/1003 MKII laps up modern film soundtracks. With *Blade Runner 2049* (4K Blu-ray) it adds scale to the soundfield, and showcases a low-end slam that's great for the price. Whether it's the blast of K's gun, or a spinner flying into a ruined building, the bass effects come across fast and precise.

And some moments feel supremely visceral. This is especially true during a scene in *Andor* (Disney+), where a TIE fighter flies through a valley, and over the heads of our heroes. The sensation of raw power is genuinely unnerving, this diminutive sub not breaking a sweat. It doesn't plumb the depths, but there's a bassy richness and responsiveness that's appealing.

### Sure to please

The HT/1003 MKII isn't a heavyweight sub, all blunt-force trauma and no finesse; instead it's a middleweight with nimble feet and powerful jabs. That's not to say it can't throw the occasional haymaker, but expectations need to be managed. If you want a REL sub that's seismic you should really be looking at the larger HT/1205 MKII or even the suitably-named Predator II.

Yet anyone considering the HT/1003 MKII probably wants an air-mover for a compact, affordable system. If so, this latest REL model is sure to please ■

## AV INFO

**PRODUCT:** 10in front-firing sealed subwoofer

**POSITION:** Entry point in REL's HT range

**PEERS:** SVS SB-1000 Pro; Velodyne DB-8; Paradigm Defiance V10

## HCC VERDICT



**REL HT/1003 MKII**  
→ £699 → www.rel.net

**WE SAY:** If you've got limited space, this capable, responsive and affordable little sub will help hammer your home cinema's low-end into shape.