



Broadside of bass

REL has nicknamed the HT/1205 MKII – its new mid-range home theatre subwoofer – the 'Cannon'. **Steve Withers** loads, takes aim and fires

AV INFO

PRODUCT: 12in front-firing sealed subwoofer

POSITION: Mid-range model in REL's HT stable

PEERS: SVS SB-2000 Pro; Velodyne DB-12; Paradigm Defiance V12

THE REL HT/1205 MKII is the new mid-range model in the brand's lineup of dedicated home theatre subwoofers, sandwiched between the entry-level HT/1003 MKII (see *HCC* #336) and high-end HT/1510 (see *HCC* #333).

When REL launched the HT/1510 it was nicknamed the 'Predator', which seemed appropriate for a sub capable of bass that felt like Arnie had just nuked an alien big-game hunter. The brand obviously liked the feedback, and thus chose to name the HT/1003 the 'Hammer' and the HT/1205 the 'Cannon' for their MKII iterations.

It's certainly in line with the concept of these more home cinema-centric subwoofers that eschew REL's usual emphasis on musicality for a muscular approach primarily aimed at multichannel movie soundtracks. Gone are the high-level Neutrik Speakon connectors found on most of the brand's subs, replaced with simple LFE inputs.

Trickledown tech

The two MKII subs have been given various upgrades based on improvements introduced on the Predator. They use a new 'CarbonGlas' (glass fibre/carbon fibre) composite driver, updated NextGen5 Class D amps, improved filters for better bass response, and restyled cabinets.

In the case of the HT/1205 MKII, as the model name implies, it uses a front-firing 12in driver partnered with enough amplification to deliver a claimed 500W of continuous RMS grunt. The driver, says REL, sports 'larger, more powerful magnets' and a revised suspension design to 'control the HT/1205 MKII's output all the way out to the limits' of both it and the NextGen 5 amplification.

In fact, REL claims the MKII can play 50 per cent louder than its predecessor, without losing precision and subtlety. Helping here is the new network of analogue filters, crossovers and limiters.

Logos aplenty

The HT/1205 MKII's cabinet adopts the lower and sleeker proportions from REL's high-end Reference models (see *HCC* #341), only it's nowhere near as big, heavy or striking-looking. The 41cm-wide, 38cm-high (approx) body has curved corners and is clad in a horizontally streaked, line-grained finish in matt black, while a black fabric grille can be attached with studs. The top panel is immaculately finished in piano black lacquer and embossed with a discreet REL logo, as are the sub's four silver-coloured feet.

The basic setup uses a level control, a dial for selecting a roll-off between 30Hz and 200Hz, and a switch for choosing 0 or 180 degrees phase. REL identifies these controls using writing that's both right-way-up and upside-down, making them easy to read when peering down the back.

While it's normal subwoofer practice to move the crossover control to the maximum setting and let the AV processor or receiver handle everything else, REL recommends experimenting with a lower crossover for a more dynamic delivery.

The HT/1205 MKII's simplicity extends to its bank of connections, which are comprised of basic low-level stereo and LFE phono inputs, along with outputs for daisy-chaining. REL also offers the optional HT-Air wireless system (£110) for anyone who doesn't fancy hiding a long cable run.

There are no EQ settings, room correction systems or remote apps here, but that does make the HT/1205 MKII less complicated to install. Basically, REL feels its subwoofers can be effectively accommodated into any room without needing to resort to electronic gimmickry, leaving that to your AV processor or receiver.

Where it counts

There's a tendency when perusing subwoofer specifications to concentrate on the lower end of the claimed frequency response and the amount of claimed onboard juice, but as is often the case in life it's not necessarily what you've got that counts, but what you do with it. This well-priced model might look a little 'safe' on paper, but it produces an overall output that benefits from genuine depth and power.

Christopher Nolan prefers to mix his movie soundtracks in basic 5.1, but the man loves that '1' LFE channel. God knows how deep the Trinity atomic bomb test in his upcoming *Oppenheimer* will go, but *Tenet* (4K Blu-ray) is a film with significant levels of low-end extension from start to finish.

From the opening scene the action is timed to Ludwig Göransson's pulse-pounding and drum-dominated original score. Here the HT/1205 MKII handles the driving percussion with detail and speed. The same is true of the gunshots, where the subwoofer gives a perfectly timed low-end hit that makes each one sound like a cannon – appropriately enough.

The *Tenet* track is all about dynamic range, which the HT/1205 MKII helps to achieve by giving the soundstage plenty of size and slam. This is especially notable when the bombs go off at the opera house, or when a Boeing 747 deliberately crashes into an airport terminal. Both these sequences sound big, but never loud or distorted, instead there's just a sensation of infrasonic scale.

Jurassic Park reached its 30th anniversary this month, and if that doesn't make you feel old, I don't know what will. To honour this milestone I took the opportunity to dust-off my Blu-ray and re-watch the scene that has graced countless sub demos – the T-Rex attack.

SPECIFICATIONS

DRIVE UNITS: 1 x 12in CarbonGlas front-firing long-throw driver **ENCLOSURE:** Sealed **FREQUENCY RESPONSE (CLAIMED):** Down to 22Hz (-6dB) **ONBOARD POWER (CLAIMED):** 500W (RMS) **REMOTE CONTROL:** No **DIMENSIONS:** 413(w) x 387(h) x 438(d)mm **WEIGHT:** 19.6kg

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

TESTED WITH



MONSTER HUNTER: This film about hunting monstrous creatures unsurprisingly has a soundtrack blessed with ludicrous amounts of LFE that often goes below 20Hz. The climactic battle with a dragon can reduce lesser subs to quivering wrecks, but is the perfect test of the HT/1205 MKII's clean and sustained extension.



The gradually increasing LFE rumbles are synchronised to the ripples in the water, and as the bass increases it becomes unnerving. Once the angry dinosaur breaks cover, the HT/1205 MKII nimbly weaves its low-frequency output around its movements, giving each footstep added weight. This is an impressive performance from a sub-£1,000, er, sub.

Next up was *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* (4K BD), as its long-awaited sequel is currently in cinemas. This is a film with insane amounts of LFE that frequently dip well below 20Hz – including whenever the

dimensional collider is fired up and tears a hole in reality. Yet REL's filters keep the bass clean and powerful without it feeling muddy or distorted.

Articulate and attacking

The HT/1205 MKII lacks some of the bells and whistles found on similarly priced competitors, but this is a grown-up subwoofer for those who want a powerful and dynamic low-end that's also subtle and fleet-of-foot. Looking back over our review of the predecessor model (*HCC* #290), it seems REL has finessed the performance without losing sight of what its HT series is all about.

The HT/1510 would be a better buy for larger rooms/ bigger wallets, but what this sibling lacks in depth it makes up for in a flat response, articulate delivery and attacking transients. An elegant room-friendly design doesn't hurt either, making this cannon worthy of consideration ■

HCC VERDICT



REL HT/1205 MKII
→ £849 → www.rel.net

WE SAY: If you're looking for power and attack this classy subwoofer is the kind of high-calibre artillery you should add to your home cinema arsenal.

1. This mid-tier HT Series model gets a 12in CarbonGlas driver

2. Rear panel has LFE/stereo line-level inputs/outputs, plus phase, crossover and level controls