

REL Acoustics Ltd. T-7 Subwoofer Reviewed

By: Terry London, November 9, 2012

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I have been having a great time the last six months reviewing a series of what I consider reference-level two-way stand mount monitors. This had been done in the context of my smaller two-channel system setup simply for musical enjoyment. This list includes [the LSA1 Statement](#), Reference 3A deCapo-i, and [Aerial Acoustics 5B](#). I became interested in reviewing a pair of subwoofers that would fit in, offering a physically small footprint as well as being relatively inexpensive, compared to the above-mentioned speakers, which all sell for about \$3,000. Based on having very positive listening experiences with [REL Acoustics Ltd.](#)'s physically large reference-level subwoofers, I was motivated to contact John Paul Lizars of [Sumiko Audio](#), which is the U.S. distributor for REL Acoustics Ltd. After telling Lizars that I was seeking a pair of subwoofers for a reference-level two-channel music system, he recommended the T-7, which has a relatively small footprint and retails for \$1,200. After setting up many two-channel systems with subwoofers, it has been my experience that using a pair, instead of a single subwoofer, leads to an exponential increase of what subwoofers add to the overall sonic performance of a system.



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Each T-7 measures 13.75 inches wide by 12 inches deep and 13.75 inches tall. Each 7-T weighs 34 pounds and is rated to 30Hz. The pair delivered was in a beautiful piano black gloss, having a silver metal top piece engraved with REL, and matching feet to support the 7-T from the floor. The 7-T is designed around a front-firing eight-inch passive radiator, with a down-firing active 10-inch woofer. The internal amp is Class AB and rated at 200 watts. On the back of the 7-T are the controls for input connectors (high-level Neutrik Speakon, low-level single phono, LFE phono), phase switch (0 to 180 degrees), crossover switch (variable between 30Hz to 120Hz) and gain control (80dB). Each T-

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REL Acoustic believes very strongly that, in order to get the maximum performance out of its subwoofers, you should use the supplied Neutrik Speakon cable that is easily attached to your amplifier's speaker terminals, along with using REL's Neutrik connector in the back of each subwoofer. REL does not recommend that you use the output from a preamp or receiver unless this is absolutely necessary.

I experimented using both REL's cable and connector and am in complete agreement with the company's suggestions. The 7-T performed at a much higher level with the Neutrik Speakon cable, compared to using an RCA cable from my preamp to the 7-T. My speculative hypothesis is, that by using the amp's speaker terminals, the flavor and tonality of your amp is passed on by the 7-T for a more seamless blend between your main speakers and the subwoofer. Finally, REL Acoustics believes that while **most subwoofers** emphasize the mid-bass from 50 to 90Hz, the company's subwoofers can reproduce very low frequencies (at or around 30Hz), providing the subsonics found in music or special effects in movie tracks, which produce a more natural foundation to the music.

Although there is more benefit from a subwoofer than simply the extension of the lowest bass frequencies in the sound of the system, you do in fact get more dynamics and slam with it. However, in my experience, the wonderful and special attributes that a dialed-in subwoofer can provide to a listening area are sound-staging and spatial qualities between the players within the recording. The depth, height and width of the sound stage tremendously increases. You also get stronger image density and a more three-dimensional aspect for each player. Turning off the subwoofers flattens out the soundstage, creating a more two-dimensional image.

In my acoustic space, the placement and fine-tuning of the pair of T-7 subwoofers were straightforward and rather easy to do. Each T-7 was placed 24 inches away from the front wall on the outside corner of the two monitors and 30 inches away from the side walls. The phase was set at zero. Depending on which speaker I was using, the crossover point was anywhere from 35Hz to 50Hz. The volume also was adjusted according to the sensitivity of which speaker was being used in the system.

I used the system with the pair of T-7s on to listen to Jack Jeffer's big band arrangement of "DOUF March" ([Mapleshade](#)), which was recorded in a large hall. Magnificently, the entire soundstage totally opened up and the layering and air between the players dramatically increased in a natural way. The ambience of the recording space was also delivered where it had not been evident before the subwoofers were inserted into the chain.

I wanted to see how the T-7s would perform with a more powerful and deep bass frequency, so I listened to Dr. Lonnie Smith's 3B Hammond bass pedals on the tune "A Matterapat" (Palmetto Records). The bass pedal notes pressurized my room with the type of timbres that a 3B Hammond organ is known to deliver. Again, the spatial qualities made the listening experience more enjoyable and realistic.

Finally, listening to the late, great tenor saxophonist David "Fathead" Newman and his special rendition of "Alfie" (HighNote Records), the acoustic space and location of each player blossomed with the T-7s. The bottom octave of the sextet rhythm section increasingly became bolder, enticing you to tap your toes to the beat.

Read about the high points and low points of the REL T-7 subwoofer on [Page 2](#).

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High Points

- The T-7 is built to a very high physical standard. Its appearance is beautifully finished, and offers great flexibility in setup to blend seamlessly with your main speakers.
- The T-7 will enhance the musicality of any two-channel system and still deliver all the dB levels and macro dynamics if used in a home theater situation.
- The T-7 was auditioned with over five highly regarded two-way monitors. With the built-in adjustments, it was easy to dial them in.



Low Points

- In a high-end two-channel music system, a pair of T-7s will deliver a much higher level of sonic improvement, as opposed to just one subwoofer. Therefore, you must have enough room for the pair to get the greatest possible sonic benefits.
- If your main speakers do not perform at a high level across the entire frequency spectrum, the T-7 might show up this weakness in your primary transducers.

Competition and Comparison

Two other subwoofers that are in the T-7's price category are Monitor Audio's Silver RXW-12, valued at \$1,550, and the [Definitive Technology Super Cube-1](#), valued at \$1,199. Both offer excellent bass extension and dynamics in home theater and two-channel music applications. However, when it comes to these subwoofers' performances in a high-end two-channel music system, the T-7's tonality and more natural-sounding timbres of bass notes are on a much higher level. The T-7 will fit into any home theater system and provides the dynamics necessary to reproduce explosions and gunshots in movie tracks, yet have the finesse to bring the illusion of real music to a higher level for the listener. For more on subwoofers, please visit [Home Theater Review's Subwoofer page](#).

Conclusion

I was not at all surprised by the build quality, fit and finish of the REL Acoustics T-7 Subwoofer. The company proudly manufactures all of its speakers with excellent craftsmanship, regardless of the price

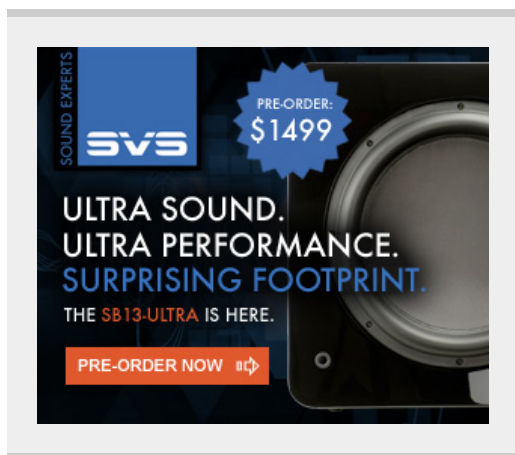
point. It was amazing to me that REL was able to bring much of the superlative sonic performance of its reference-level subwoofers to the reasonably priced T-7 Subwoofer. It will work great in a home theater system, but my goal was to see if it would add to the musicality in a two-channel high-level system strictly for music. It wonderfully did just that, the way that I described in this review. The greatest compliment that a reviewer can give a piece is to purchase it. I purchased the pair of T-7s for my smaller system, which I use to review two-way stand mount monitors.

I highly recommend that you consider including the T-7 Subwoofer in your audition list if you're shopping for subwoofers.

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