

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.