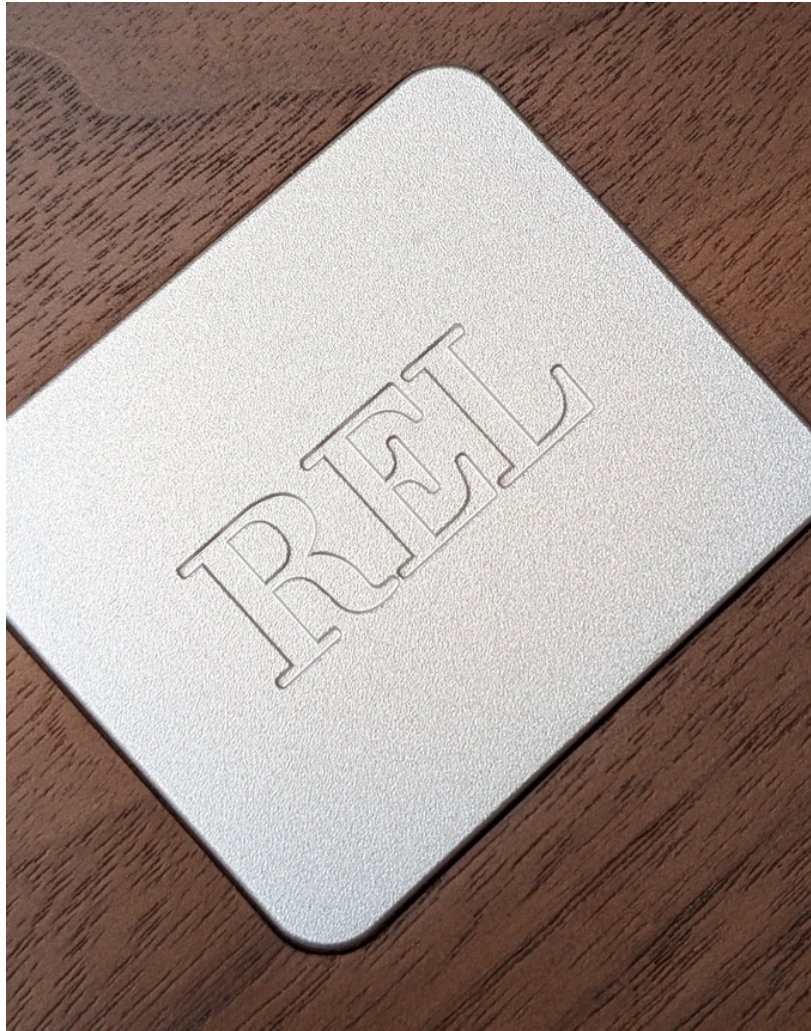


REL 99 Classic Subwoofer

"This is the single most musical REL out there"



CONTENT

Design - Page 2

Quality - Page 2

Specification - Page 2

Performance - Pages 3, 4

Overall - Page 4

Love, Like, Wish - Page 4

REL 99 CLASSIC SUBWOOFER

by Simon Wilce

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Here is a look at the new REL 99 Classic subwoofer. These are thoughts as I had a sneak listen for a couple of weeks only since the REL 99 Classic is in short supply in the UK; if you want one, and you probably do if you understand subwoofers, you had better hurry up! My own REL T/5i is suddenly sounding like a tin box after hearing the power, pace and potential in the 99 Classic. In the REL Carbon Special review, HF&MS said,

"...a subwoofer can offer the best pound-for-pound upgrade you can make to a decent HiFi system"

The 99 Classic may be the best product REL has put out; read on.



Design

The REL 99 Classic subwoofer builds on the achievements of the 98 Classic, itself a tour de force in subwoofer musicality. However, this 99 Classic is 40% bigger by volume and has a new Class D amplifier with 450 watts driving a robust 305mm (12"), 51mm (2") long-stroke paper-on-paper driver. More often than not, it is rather difficult to design a 12" cone that is fast enough to cope musically, particularly compared to a 10" cone, delivered so successfully with the 98 Classic. However, REL has done it with this driver design using this extra Class D power.

The 99 Classic is thus designed for larger rooms and, more importantly, to support larger speakers. The steel chassis, closed box, downward-firing design, and boundless power simplify the setup. The 99 can go wireless with REL's Airship II or HT-Air MkII wireless technology.



REL 99 Classic in Place

Quality

This subwoofer is exquisitely presented, as are all the models from REL. The 99 Classic boasts a beautiful walnut veneer on all four sides, with the rear carrying the inputs. Everything about the 99 Classic is classy, including the feet. The sealed box has 30mm thick walls with dimensions of (WxHxD) 400mm / 534mm x 350mm. It weighs in at a hefty 22.4kg.

The REL 99 Classic Subwoofer is £1799 in the UK. (Aug 2024)

Click this QR code for the full REL 99 Classic Subwoofer specification.



Performance

Review Equipment

The 99 Classic was initially hard-wired to the Moor Amps Angel 6 power amplifier with the provided Neutrix Speakon cable. The REL is supporting the standmounted Titan 505 loudspeakers.

Sources include a Melco N100 library with the Plixir Statement power supply upgrade and the ADOT optical ethernet media converter. It is a very quiet system indeed; with the iFi Pro iDSD DAC connected to the library via Atlas Mavros USB cable and the Grun earthing system, it's hi-fi heaven.

Physically

Setting up the 99 Classic was reasonably straightforward, but positioning in the elongated room is less critical, with so much power available, like the Carbon Special. Nonetheless, time does need to be spent getting the phase correct with a bit of REL expertise. Frequently (well, every time), one turns to *Cosmo...Old Friend* (from the Sneakers soundtrack), where the pulse needs to be distinctively long and a defined boom-boom rather than a single boom. This track lets you select the correct phasing 99 before adjusting the crossover and gain.

I've had the 99 at about 10 o'clock on the high-level gain knob; I can't see many people getting anywhere near the 450W on offer.

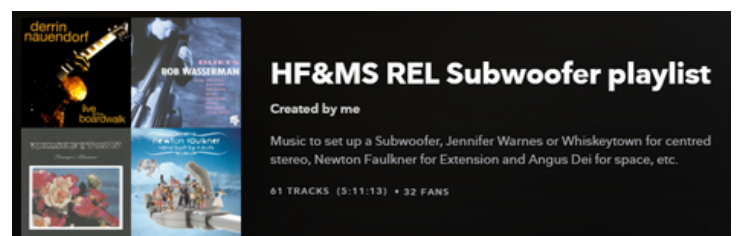
Moor Amps x Kudos Titan 505

Initially, the 99 was hooked up with the Moor Amps Angel 6 using a high-level connection, with the red wire of the Neutrix Speakon cable on the right positive terminal and the yellow wire on the left positive terminal. In my case, the black wire is connected to the right negative terminal.

The response from the 99 initially appears fast and musical; however, leaving it running for a day or so on a low level is a wise move. Now, I am no Kendrick Lamar devotee, but I do like some of his tracks for review purposes, and *Humble* (Skrillex Remix, which is very explicit, Qobuz 16-bit, 44.1kHz) is a challenging track with plenty of low-end response. With the bass-loading weight taken by the Classic 99, much of the musicality will be delivered by the Kudos Titan 505s. It is a musical journey and stunning to listen to. This is more than just a huge sound; the 99 Classic creates a space for the loudspeakers to work. Unplugging the 99 is a very dispiriting affair.



REL's 99 Classic 12" driver



Scan this QR Code for the Review Playlist



Naim Audio New Classic NAP 250 x Triangle Borea BR10

Pairing the Classic 99 with the Naim Audio New Classic NAP 250 necessitates, in my case, direct wiring to the loudspeaker terminals (with Red and Yellow in a positive terminal and Black in the negative). This is no big deal and works well with my own KEF R700s and the imposing Triangle Borea BR10s, currently on loan here at HF&MS. Naim has a slightly different grounding in their electronics, but this is not a problem.

This room is over 50m2 and has a high ceiling. After the requisite phase tuning and setting up, everything is in place in this big room.

The Classic 99 is massive in this bigger room. It is in 2.1 cinema mode here. Firing at the correct height onto a wooden floor, the room is filled with energy as the loudspeakers are apparently freed up to do their thing. The bass loading appears and feels bigger, faster, and deeper. There is no better example of this energy than in Newton Faulkner's *Teardrops* or, better still, Joss Stone's driving *Snakes and Ladders* (Qobuz CD 16-bit, 44.1kHz), where the sub-bass is often missing in most loudspeakers.

Even watching TV on the iPlayer feels like a more fulfilling experience. *The Turkish Detective*, which has an oriental RnB indie vibe, is full in the room and attracts enquiring attention from all family members.

“

...BASS LOADING APPEARS AND FEELS BIGGER,
FASTER, AND DEEPER

”

Overall

This is a long-term investment in your life. This Classic 99 will add to even the best larger speakers. As I have previously noted, a subwoofer can be the most significant upgrade to any HiFi system. This is the single most musical REL out there.

Love

Bigger
Faster
Deeper



Like

Styling
Finish

Wish

I'd quite like to buy one of these