

# REL T/9x Red subwoofer

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**T**he standard REL T/9x is effectively the replacement to the T/9i we tested in Issue 135, using the technology and product developments seen in the Serie T/7x reviewed in Issue 195. It has a 10" long-throw FibreAlloy cone with an inverted alloy centre cap in a steel chassis firing toward the listener. There is an almost identical driver of the same size firing into the floor as a passive radiator. The sub is powered by a 350W Class A/B amplifier and it features REL's unique high/low level connections. These make it good for home cinema and hi-fi.

Ostensibly, the limited-edition T/9x Red is the same subwoofer in a natty shade of gloss red at a price premium. But looks can be deceptive. It's finished in Rosso Corsa, a specific red finish usually associated very fast Italian cars with prancing horses in their logos. That is not an easy – or cheap – paint to work with and the result is basically a 'blueprinted' version of the standard cabinet built to an

excessive degree. Get it even slightly sub-par and the subwoofer gets an orange-peel finish and guys in very smart suits take you for a one-way ride into the desert.

## Super stiff

The result is a cabinet of even greater stiffness, that can take an even faster than standard drive unit. So, that main FibreAlloy cone gets an upgrade by replacing the light, inverted alloy centre cap with an even lighter carbon-fibre inverted centre cap. And lighter means faster. Much faster.

Of course, the problem with a Limited Edition model is almost as soon as you discuss it, it's gone. The T/9x Red is no exception. The subwoofer almost immediately sold out around the world and, while there are stocks in dealers, they are strictly limited. That invites the question, "why review a sold out product?" The T/9x Red proved so popular, that REL is considering its next options. Maybe one will appear in a bold shade of yellow or orange, or maybe Red will return. Its surprising success makes its return a dead cert. >>





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» In set-up and use, however, the colour of the cabinet and the choice of drive cover is unimportant. REL's set-up procedure is now so well known I feel it's almost pointless to discuss, as you are going over a well-ploughed field. But for the uninitiated, the REL has both high-level and low-level inputs. The low level inputs are the standards 'point one' subwoofer channel most commonly seen in home cinema system. The high-level is more interesting from an audio perspective. This connects to the amplifier's loudspeaker terminals (with the speakers plugged in; you are running in parallel) via a long cable with a Neutrik connector at the REL end.

The other curious (for the uninitiated once more) part of the set-up for stereo use is just how low you set the subwoofer. You're not watching a 1980s action movie, don't set the subwoofer so high it barks along with the music. Set it so that it's only just audible, then turn it down one more notch. Come back in a week and check the settings in case something changed... you often need to turn the sub down even lower.

When you do this, a magical transformation takes place. Not to the subwoofer... to your loudspeakers. They sound bigger and better. The soundstage takes on a wider and deeper property, and the midrange gets more open. So far, so REL. What happens in the T9/x Red.

I'm pretty au fait with the degree of improvement the T-Series does to systems, so I expected the same from the T9/x Red. What I got was something altogether faster and that helped make the loudspeakers more alive further up the frequency range. This holds across the whole

loudspeaker gamut, although I can't imagine someone with half a million quid's worth of giant speaker adding a subwoofer at this price point. It costs less than a fuse for super high-enders. They are missing a trick.

The speed of the T9/x Red is best experienced by playing something with fast higher-frequency transients, or transients across the board. Infected Mushroom's 'End of the Road' is a perfect track to highlight when subs go right... and wrong. The sheer onslaught of attacking noises, including glass shattering and a powerful beat can go one of two ways with a sub; it cleans up the midrange so you can hear more, or it adds 'thump'. The T9/x Red really brings out the speed of those glass-breaking transients. Yes, you can set it to thumpy bass, but although your inner lout might approve, your outer audiophile will prefer something more musically beneficial.

In a way, the biggest downside to the REL T9/x Red is to REL rather than end users. It's so good, and so fast it could cannibalise sales of bigger and notionally better subwoofers from the brand. Fortunately, the bigger subwoofers also have greater sound reinforcement characteristics than the T9/x, Red or not. The ambience thing and the glow-up it brings to loudspeakers... that's something the T9/x Red has got absolutely nailed down. But that powerful underpinning that adds rooted in space solidity to recordings... for that, you need a bigger subwoofer, as there's no replacement for displacement. A bigger subwoofer moving more air will deliver deeper, better controlled bass than even the T9/x Red.

### Fast enough

There is enough difference between the REL T9/x Red and other T-Series subwoofers to make this an exciting development for the company. Its faster pace makes it hard to ignore. The success of the T9/x Red suggests another limited edition could be round the corner. Even if not, I hope this is the first in a new line of even faster and more polished REL subwoofers, ones that have got all the right chops in all the right places... just like the T9/x Red. +

### Price and contact details

REL T9/x Red £1,549, \$1,650, €1,969

Standard REL T9x: £1,399, \$1,500, €1,769

Manufacturer REL Acoustics

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