

SUBWOOFER



REL Acoustics

Serie S2

This newly designed sub is part of a new range of models that REL calls Sub-Bass Systems, and has been three years in the making. Looking over the neat styling and flexible design it is easy to appreciate where your money is being spent. The cabinet is constructed from marine ply for better rigidity and superior bracing, and the solid billeted piece of aluminium on the top face is said to aid the dispersion of unwanted energy from the cabinet.

Available in gloss piano black and white lacquer finishes, removing the front panel grilles reveals the front-firing 250mm long-throw paper maché driver that is reinforced with a super alloy plate for greater rigidity. It's driven by a claimed 250W amplifier built by REL, which it says is designed to perfectly match and give the correct power for the relative size of the S2's cabinet and drivers. Underneath is a 250mm carbon fibre passive driver, and even the shape and height of the feet are designed to optimise performance.

The controls and connections on the rear panel have been simplified for ease of set up, and if you're not keen on trailing a cable from your amplifier to the sub there's a wireless receiver already built in. It uses the company's

own Longbow uncompressed audio system to receive signals up to 15m away from the sending unit – available separately for £200. The sender utilises both high-level and LFE (where applicable), and is a simple pairing device with no need for the use of your home network hub, so though we don't use the S2 in this way, it should be straightforward to connect to an amplifier and set up.

Sound quality

Positioning the S2 correctly in the room is without doubt the most important thing to get right. For optimum performance in the listening room we find it works at its best positioned in the corner, placed in fairly close proximity to a pair of Dynaudio X38 floorstanding loudspeakers, and angled so that it fires diagonally down the length of the room. After some fine tuning using the controls on the back with a broad range of different musical styles containing natural low bass, we're ready to rumble.

REL explains that because of the nature of the driver material it uses, it is necessary to spend some time running the unit in before it reaches optimum performance levels. Each model has already spent several hours being run in before it is sent out, but

REL recommends a few additional hours in situ and some reduction of the gain setting once it has had time to fully warm up.

The addition of the S2 into our system is a revelation, and instantly results in more drive and energy to the lowest register. It brings a satisfying smile to our faces when listening to Jennifer Warnes' *Ballad Of The Runaway Horse*, giving the impression of a significantly fuller and larger soundstage, while the double bass that underpins the track sounds even more achingly sad than ever, showing the extent of low bass information we've been missing.

The inclusion of the REL with the Dynaudio floorstanders doesn't impact on their performance in any negative way whatsoever – it only appears to enhance their capabilities further and draw attention to the perception of the amount of midband detail. Lorde's *Royals* is very well extended and will show off the bass capabilities of any loudspeakers, but by adding in the S2 it's easy to appreciate just how extended the bass line is, showing off the track's impressive range and highlighting the quality of the recording.

Nowhere is the inclusion of the REL more effective than with hi-res material. A 24-bit/48kHz version of Jean Michel Jarre's *Oxygene* demonstrates just how rich and three-dimensional this track can sound, as the REL opens up its impressive scale and soundstage, breathing new life into the recording.

Conclusion

The REL S2 merges beautifully into our system, adding a greater sense of scale and depth to tracks. With some fine tuning, it is unobtrusive and impresses anyone that listens with its pace and insightfulness on recordings old and new. It shows off hi-res audio to tremendous effect and will compliment any hi-fi system ●

DETAILS

PRICE
£1,000

ORIGIN
UK

WEIGHT
18.1kg

DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
349 x 368 x 426mm

FEATURES

- 250mm long-throw active drive
- 250mm passive radiator
- Class D amplifier
- Quoted power: 250W

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Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY
★★★★★

VALUE FOR MONEY
★★★★★

BUILD QUALITY
★★★★★

FEATURES
★★★★★

LIKE: Impressive musicality; smooth integration; flexibility

DISLIKE: Slightly high price; the wireless transmitter is a £200 add on

WE SAY: Adds speed and dynamic energy to any system, and is musically engaging

OVERALL

