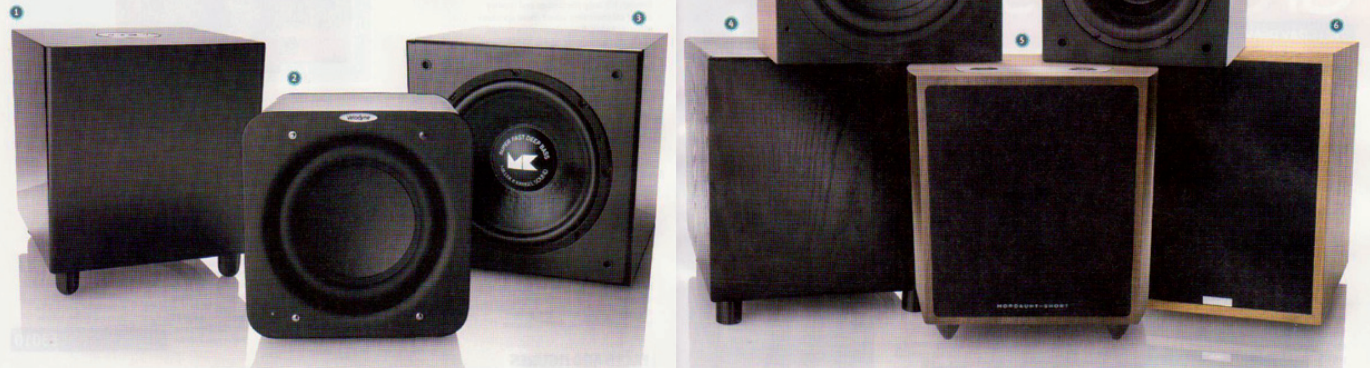


BIGGER, BETTER BASS FOR YOUR MOVIES

Partial to a bit of punch from your home cinema? We've gathered eight new subwoofers together to find out which will rock your world and which will struggle to make your curtains twitch...



- 1 MONITOR AUDIO RADIUS 370HD**
£500
★★★★☆
As befits a component designed to fit in to a 'style'-orientated multichannel speaker package, the Radius 370HD is a good-looking, well-made device. Once hooked into a system we'd recommend doing so before switching on, as the Radius gets noticeably hot at the rear. It offers a stack of good impressions. There's no shortage of punch or drive, differing bass sounds are explicitly described, and it has noteworthy dynamic heft. It isn't the last word in precision, though, letting the inward and outward edges of notes occasionally become a little fuzzy.
VERDICT Plenty of plus-points, but there are more meticulous subs
- 2 VELODYNE SPL-10001**
£700
★★★★☆
'Conservative' is the word generally used to describe subwoofer design, so any deviance from the square-box norm is to be applauded, even if it's as mild as Velodyne's 'slightly rounded box'. 'Conservative' doesn't describe the 10001's sound, though: briefly, subcompact low frequencies are bolstered by good tonal differentiation and an impression of limitless power. It's a pity, then, that the leading and trailing edges of bass notes are so compromised in the Velodyne's hands - there's a lack of focus to the beginning and end of sounds that can only be described as 'blurry'.
VERDICT Forceful low frequencies at any volume, but hamstrung by vague timing
- 3 MK XENON SB-12**
£700
★★★★★
Here's an almost elemental subwoofer from one of the established experts - a big black box with a whacking great driver. The fact that the driver says "SuperFast Deep Bass" ought to clear up any confusion. And that's exactly what the MK serves up: it's a barrel-chested powerhouse, delivering bass with vigour and purpose. Low frequencies are full-bodied, hard-hitting and rapid, with enjoyable tonal variation and slapped-face immediacy. Though capable of deft modulation of sound, the Xenon is a brilliantly subtle-looking beauty that won't be easy to hide - and the glossy black finish is easily marked.
VERDICT It's an ASBO* waiting to happen, but there's more to the MK than attack
- 4 MI ACOUSTICS PRO 55 MK1**
£500
★★★★☆
There are only a few rules to creating a worthwhile subwoofer, but the Pro 55 MK1 doesn't follow all of them. In terms of looks - a nondescript black box with little feet - it's right on the money. Where sheer volume is concerned, it's up to scratch too: the MI Acoustics will go louder than any sensible owner will require. And as for impact, well, there's plenty of it. But it doesn't display much in the way of tonal subtlety, and the Pro 55 MK1 can't control the trailing edge of bass notes as well as more capable rivals. It "bottoms out" easily, too, meaning all that volume is best left unexplored.
VERDICT Not short of drive or attack, but there's not too much finesse on offer here
- 5 MORDAUNT-SHORT MEZZO 9**
£700
★★★★★
Congratulations to Mordaunt Short, whose handsome Mezzo range includes this slightly unusual, beautifully finished sub. The Mezzo 9 packs a hefty amp, two drivers firing in opposite directions and a useful remote-control cum sound-pressure-meter. The over-complicated user interface on top of the machine is less successful, mind you. In action, the 9 is fearsomely loud. It's not the most clinical sub we've heard, but it's far from being a blunt instrument - it's detailed and articulate, and its impenetrable volume levels can set a whole room resonating in sympathy. In terms of clout, it's prodigious.
VERDICT Interesting looks, high specs, and volume outweigh a lack of refinement
- 6 TANNOY REVOLUTION 1001**
£300
★★★★☆
This subwoofer is the last piece of Tannoy's Revolution series gigase, and it's a wee bit later than its siblings. We've had a chance to listen to nearly all the Revolution Signature range and, sorry to say, the 1001 subwoofer is the least impressive element of it. Problem is, it sounds nearly as discreet as it looks - even though it's only £300, we'd still like a bit more drive and attack. There's nothing wrong with what the Tannoy does - it differentiates bass notes well and is able to start and stop promptly - but the overall signature is altogether too tentative, which is the last thing you want from a sub.
VERDICT Not without talent, the Tannoy is far too keen to hide its light under a bushel
- 7 B&W ASW610**
£400
★★★★★
Of course, there's no denying the B&W ASW610 does offer an awful lot of thump for your money. For a modest-sized box, it generates deep, solid low frequencies with a great deal of impact - and thanks to fine dynamic ability and well-controlled driver movement, it times bass notes impressively, too. Add superior tonal ability to the mix - the B&W differentiates a bass drum from a bass string with ease - and the result is one of the most enjoyable subs we've heard in a while. It's splendid value for money.
VERDICT Sounds bigger than it looks, and more expensive than its price-tag
- 8 SUNFIRE HRS-8**
£650
★★★★★
How do you fit a great big sub into your front room without causing upheaval? Buy one that sounds bigger than it looks, obviously - and that's where Sunfire's HRS-8 comes in. Despite featuring a 20cm driver and a claimed 1000 Watts of amplification, the Sunfire is the smallest sub here - just 25cm cubed, and all of that smoothly finished. It punches well above its size, bringing scale and authority quite at odds with its physical appearance. But, as Scotty said, you cannot rewrite the laws of physics - the Sunfire gets to its limit quicker than we'd like.
VERDICT Compact sub capable of full-size sound - just don't push it too hard

MK Sound Xenon SB-12 Earns Top Marks in 8-way Subwoofer Shootout



"Bigger Better Bass for Your Movies"

Under this banner headline, the Nov. 2008 issue of What Hi-Fi Sound and Vision (UK) features a subwoofer shootout, designed to answer the age-old existential question:

"Partial to a bit of punch from your home cinema? We've gathered eight new subwoofers together to find out which will rock your world and which will struggle to make your curtains twitch."

The MK Sound Xenon SB-12 Is one of only two combatants to receive top marks - 6 stars out of 6.

"Here's an almost elemental subwoofer from one of the established experts - a big black box with a whacking great driver. The fact that the driver says "SuperFast Deep Bass" ought to clear up any confusion. And that's exactly what the MK serves up - It's a barrel-chested powerhouse, delivering bass with vigour and purpose. Low frequencies are full-bodied, hard-hitting and rapid, with enjoyable tonal variation and slapped-face immediacy. Though capable of deft modulation of sound, the Xenon is a brilliantly subtle-looking beauty that won't be easy to hide - and the glossy black finish is easily marked."

"VERDICT It's an ASBO* waiting to happen, but there's more to the MK than attack."

(* For those of you unfamiliar with British law, the Anti-Social Behaviour Order was passed in 2004 to curtail anti-social behavior, defined as "incidents or actions that cause damage to an area or affect the quality of life of individuals".)

