

Little wonder

Subwoofers are typically considered an essential part of the home theatre milieu, where they deliver the bone-shaking, window-rattling bottom end so desired by movie buffs.

Indeed, given the attention afforded the Low-Frequency Effects (LFE) channel in movie soundtrack mixes, one could describe the presence of a subwoofer (or even more than one) as absolutely essential to the overall realism of the home movie experience.

Problem is, not everybody has the space for a big subwoofer. It may seem an innocuous

enough object, but unobtrusively positioning a big, heavy box with a large driver in a carefully decorated living room is a challenge – let alone placing it to optimise performance.

While, by definition, some of the very best subwoofers are also some of the biggest, there are various ways to keep the dimensions of a sub within reason, while still enjoying the kind of chest-thumping bass you'd expect.

PSB's solution is a relatively small box equipped with a fairly small drive unit, but accompanied by two passive radiators. Effectively, the radiators allow the small box to

behave like a big one sonically, while the small, but stiff drive unit, with its extended-excursion surround, still moves ample air.

Add a decent amount of muscle in the form of a solid state amplifier, rated at 750 watts of continuous output, and you have the makings of sonic marvel.

The SubSeries HD10 is compact and fairly plain, although the all-black finish and metal grille are smart enough to withstand closer scrutiny. The front-firing poly-coated fibre cone driver is partnered by a similarly sized passive radiator on either side.



VITAL STATS

TypeSealed chamber, passive radiators
Power output ..750 watts (continuous)
Frequency response30 to 150 Hz
 (anechoic)
Drive units254 mm poly-coated
 fibre cone woofer, 2x 254 mm
 passive radiators
InputsLFE, line level, speaker level
OutputsLine level, speaker level, LFE
Dimensions (HxWxD)
305x305x305 mm
Weight..... 17,2 kg

PRICE.....R13 300

VERDICT

Bold and authoritative delivery that belies the size of this sub. Easily configured, and ample adjustment scope. A remote control would be handy, though...

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That leaves the rear panel for all the switchgear and connection sockets, all of which is well marked and pretty straightforward.

The PSB has stereo line-level inputs, and an LFE input, reciprocated by an identical set of outputs. Thus, in stereo set-ups, the pre-amplifier's signal feed should be sent via the PSB's panel, which incorporates a low-pass filter at 80 Hz, and passes on the thus modified signal to the power amplifier.

The reasoning here is that both power amplifier and, especially, the speakers, benefit from having to deal with a reduced frequency range, leaving the PSB to look after all the frequencies below 80 Hz.

For home theatre applications, the LFE output of the AV receiver or processor is linked to the LFE input of the PSB.

This presupposes that the receiver or processor is providing bass management functions, which means that the LFE feed already contains only the frequency range required from the subwoofer.

If your set-up doesn't allow a pre-out and power-in connection, you link the PSB to the system via the high-output connections, which will take the feed from the amplifier's speaker binding posts, while the speakers, in turn, are connected up the high-output binding posts on the PSB's control panel.

The PSB also offers rotary controls for output level, frequency cut-off (adjustable between 50 and 150 Hz) and a phase adjustment. Together, these three allow the end-user to fine-tune the sub's performance for optimal integration with the existing system.

The controls work well enough, but I found that it was necessary to adjust the output level quite frequently to match the particular properties of different recordings: what was perfect for one CD would be too much for another.

This presupposes that the PSB should be located somewhere where the rear panel controls are easily accessed. Even better

would have been a remote control allowing on-the-fly adjustment from the listening position – but that's a feature typically only found on dearer designs.

That apart, the PSB really strutted its sub-bass stuff with gusto. In my home theatre system, where two KEF subs usually do the sub-bass honours, it was more than comfortable with assuming that role on its own, and delivered the goods in pretty convincing terms.

Set-up was a simple affair, with the cut-off set to its highest, 150 Hz level (since the accompanying Yamaha would provide the bass management via its LFE output), phase at 0 degrees, and the typical output setting quickly determined with a test track or two.

I liked the PSB's penchant for precision and attack, which allowed the system to really get to grips with challenging effects, while reaching down low enough to make the windows rattle. It didn't have quite the fullness and tactile response of my two-sub combo, but there was no shortage of outright clout or authority.

I also found that, in this application, making adjustments to the output level were less

frequently required, and could also be tweaked on the amplifier side – perhaps part of PSB's thinking, and also an indication that the HD10's role is considered more AV than stereo system-biased.

In my stereo listening room, setting up the PSB took a little longer, with positioning more of an issue – especially since it had to be tucked in between an array of bass traps towards the rear of the room. However, once ensconced, and with some fine-tuning of frequency cut-off and level, the results were superb.

My usual Vivid Audio 1.5 reference speakers reach down remarkably low for their size, so I was really only interested in boosting response at around 55 Hz and lower, which the HD10 achieved quite admirably.

I also ran the HD10 in conjunction with my smaller Marantz MA-22 monoblock/Dynaudio Audience 52-based system, where the frequency requirement from the PSB was somewhat more extended – typically around 65 Hz and lower.

In both instances, the PSB's agile performance and precise attack added foundation and authority to the delivery, while sonic integration was easily achieved. The sub never sullied the sound, but brought smoother, quicker definition to the bottom-end, with commensurate benefits to the overall delivery.

That said, I did find myself adjusting the output level frequently, as mentioned, and this can become something of an irritating chore if you regularly skip between different recordings, and source components, during a listening session. If I was going to add a sub to my stereo system, I would certainly look for a unit with a remote-controllable output level.

The PSB is a fine subwoofer in every respect. Its compact construction will be welcomed by many, especially since it sounds much bigger and more authoritative than its size suggests. While its primary application is in home theatre systems, it does a sterling job in stereo environments, too.

Deon Schoeman