

78 REL GIBRALTAR G1 → Approx £3,300

Rock of Gibraltar

Adam Rayner gets reacquainted with REL and spends some quality time with its newest 'sub-bass system'. Oh, how his neighbours loved him for it

I've heard a lot of extraordinary sound in my time. Niagara Falls' roar, the rumble of the geothermal heat release vent outside Reykjavik, and even a sonic boom from Concorde. All of which is why I adore REL, and the monstrous subwoofers it makes, so much.

I got to know REL's original designer Richard Lord, and came to adore his happy attitude, depth of passion and sheer skill. Skill that had his company exalted to the very top of his field.

So when he retired, I was a bit gutted. With a new company called Sumiko audio buying the brand I was worried things wouldn't be the same, even though Richard himself was confident that things would be okay. And until recently, the legendary ST series was still being made and sold and had not been bettered. With the master gone, had REL forgotten how to make class-leading, full-fat woofers?

Thankfully, not all – as proven by the REL Gibraltar G1 on test here. In

AV/CV

PRODUCT:
12in sub with Class AB amplification

POSITION:
Above the G2 in REL's Gibraltar range

PEERS:
B&W DB1; Paradigm SUB 2; Velodyne DD18+

an understated way, this is the most awesomely controlled, deep-reaching and utterly brilliant subwoofer REL have ever made.

Warm applause

The G1 has a Class AB, warm and rich analogue amplifier of colossal power in its guts. There's Set-Safe circuitry to control over-enthusiasm if need be and it offers high-level and low-level simultaneous inputs.

It also has the single most sexy remote control in all of Bassdom – milled from aluminium and feeling like a piece of military ordnance.

The G1 is a sealed box, as opposed to the ported REL subs of yesteryear. The company informs me that this wasn't a decision taken lightly, and that tiny and subtle differences in cabinet shape (to the order of a sixteenth of an inch) had been toyed with until it reached the desired performance. Similar attention to detail has apparently been paid to the new 12in driver. This is made from coarse weave carbon fibre and has a massive surround, so clearly can go a long way in and out. That's all the info I can give you, as REL insist the rest is 'commercially sensitive.'

In use, it's effortless, with no seeming limit to its low-end extension (REL rates it at 15Hz at -6dB). With movie soundtracks the G1 ensnares the LFE channel and thumps it out, lending weight and authority to every bomb explosion, car crash and rumble of thunder you care to throw at it. It'll make your surround speakers look insipid if they're not of a similar performance level. There's a warmth and richness to its tone that's easy on the ears, and it tracks basslines with aplomb.

Yes, its price tag puts it beyond most people's budgets, but serious system builders should definitely apply. REL's G1 is up there with B&W's DB-1 in the subwoofer arms race, make no mistake ●

LED weight:
The G1 sports a front-mounted LED display



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→ Specifications

Drive Unit: 1 x 12in forward-firing coarse weave carbon fibre cone, with 1.75in of pistonic stroke

Enclosure: Sealed, curved
Frequency Response: 15Hz @ -6dB to crossover in-room

On-Board Power: 600W, Class AB
Dimensions: 572(w) x 464(h) x 660(d)mm

Weight: 49Kg

Connections: High-level Neutrik Speakon; low-level stereo phono; LFE phono

HCC VERDICT

REL Gibraltar G1 → £3,300 Approx
→ Supplier: www.rel.net
→ Tel: 01656 768 777

Highs: Ground-rippling lows with intense grip; excellent remote control; optional rails allow you to stack more than one

Lows: No onboard self-EQ tech, which many of its rivals have

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5