

# Theory of RELativity

The largest of the new entry-level RELs is a natural for stereo and multichannel systems alike

**PRODUCT** REL T1

**TYPE** Active subwoofer

**PRICE** £595

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**R**EL has bounced back from its takeover by the US Sumiko group with a wholesale revamp of its various ranges, the largest and most ambitious of which has yet to reach our shores. When we first saw what it was doing at last year's CES in Las Vegas, we were concerned that REL was in the throes of diluting its designs to suit the tastes of the US market. We were wrong, and the new REL has obviously worked extremely hard on the products we've seen so far from the R series. But now it's time to see how the entry-level T series fares. The T1 reviewed here is the largest of three otherwise identical models.

Perhaps a rather telling change is a thoughtful modification to the old REL control system. In its favour, the old system allowed the subwoofer to be wired simultaneously at speaker level so that the sub would adapt to music (with connections made in series

with the main stereo speakers), and from the LFE channel for multichannel operation, but the setting up procedure was opaque to put it mildly. The good news is that although it is much easier to configure, the dual input arrangement has been retained. This means you can switch between different types of source material without needing to change settings or even flicking a switch. The baby, it seems, has not been thrown out with the bathwater.

The T1 is rather different from previous RELs. For the first time, a forward-firing passive unit (ABR) has been added to a downward-firing actively driven unit, replacing the sealed box and vented loading. The sub is supported at an appropriate height with piano gloss-finished hardwood rails, one of the T1's two most distinctive features. The other, the domed covers over the two drivers, are shaped to allow the long cone excursions necessary at high SPLs.

## SOUND QUALITY

In common with REL's standard practice, the T1 is designed to bolster the host system's low frequency output, without low-pass filtering

the main system, and operating only up to the low frequency cut-off of the main speakers. You can still cross over at 80Hz or even higher if it really turns you on, but most floorstanders work down to 30Hz, and normal size standmounts down to, say, 40Hz. The REL usefully adds half to one octave of extension to such speakers without materially affecting their performance, the low crossover frequency ensuring this happens where the ear is relatively insensitive to the handover.

ABR loading has the benefit of the extra LF extension you expect from port loading, but there is none of the wind noise expected from such designs. The T1 extends seamlessly downwards, and can be used to (excuse the Bush-ism) 'subwoofery' large speakers, including for this test B&W CM7 floorstanders and the Jamo C803, a largish standmount. As long as the levels are set with some care and sensitivity (after the subwoofer has been fully run in, by the way) the T1's output is reasonably flat in output down to its final cut-off, though you may encounter excessive warmth with what may at first seem like a natural handover to the main speakers. It goes loud too, without distortion or any audible compression.

The musical result is certainly impressive – the system sounds warmer and more tactile, and produces a bass output that can sound remarkably 'out of the box'. Sometimes it sounds 'out of the room' rather than being localised to the speaker complement. It is this expansiveness and a richer tonal colour palate that the T1 brings to the party. **HFC**

*Alvin Gold*

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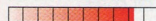


## VERDICT

**SOUND >> 85%**



**FEATURES >> 84%**



**BUILD >> 85%**



**VALUE >> 90%**



### PRO

A musical-sounding sub that delivers impressive bass extension and is capable of melding seamlessly with the host system. Flexible set-up and a strong delivery with both music and movies.

### CON

Some limited residual unevenness of output makes particular demands on system set-up.

### CONCLUSION

Affordable, high-performance subwoofer sets standards at its price level. Bass output is impressive, there are few cabinet related side effects and – most important of all – the T1 materially adds musical value to each of the systems tested.

**HI-FI CHOICE**  
OVERALL SCORE >> **88%**