

76 REL T5 → Approx £450

Diminutive diva

Adam Rayner has a play with one of REL's smaller subwoofers and finds the UK bass brand can still impress even at this size



Black box: Hardly the most inspired design, but unobtrusive

AV/CV

PRODUCT: 8in, 125W subwoofer with simultaneous LFE and speaker-level inputs

POSITION: One up from the T-Zero

PEERS: KEF Kube 2; Bowers & Wilkins ASW 608; Monitor Audio Bronze BXW-10

The last REL subwoofer I reviewed was the brand's mightiest – the flagship G1, which offers bass practically down to infrasonics at stupefying levels. The T5 auditioned here is a different proposition, retailing for £450 rather than £3,000. Yet it's still equally impressive in its own way – an excellent subwoofer, very much a chip off the old block, and quietly equipped with classy technology.

The T5 parks a proprietary downward-firing 8in driver within a sealed box and sits above the floor on its own feet. The design is resolutely black, with just a brushed metal badge spoiling the top surface.

The amp is an A/B design rather than the Class D offerings found in most rivals (and REL's own more affordable T-Zero), and is able to serve up a sweet and potent sound from a relatively low power – in this case 'just' 125W. Yet I think the control and connection options are the really clever bit. With the T5, you can use the speaker-level input and

the .1 feed from your AVR at the same time, with definable levels. The benefit is that movies are typically mixed for large front speakers, and plenty of bass is not routed to the LFE channel at all when mastered to domestic disc – unless you take a signal from the speaker feed and use it simultaneously. Only a few brands do this and the difference is palpable. A 10m Neutrik SpeakON cable is provided for this kind of setup.

As ever, I called upon a slice of top-quality CGI fare to test the REL's mettle – *Puss In Boots* on Blu-ray. For an affordable woofer, the performance was astonishing, offering grip and depth and, even in my suburban through-lounge, actual room pressurisation! There was a limit to the amount – two in tandem would work better – but it was still a welcome occurrence.

DreamWorks' *toon* is packed with delicious bass moments, from the outlaws Jack & Jill arriving at an inn and shooting a punter so a room becomes available, to a huge goose shaking the earth like a T-Rex – complete with a water-moving-in-a-puddle parody shot. The T5 ate them all, underpinning my floorstanders without a care in the world.

I was equally impressed by the woofer's internal control, which means that no matter how stupidly you may try to overdrive the unit, it'll only go up to its top ability and refuses to squawk, preferring to rein back until sanity returns and you get rich, large bass throughout.

Fierce competition

While the G1 has few competitors, the T5 sits in a fierce section of the subwoofer market, with rivals such as KEF's Kube 2 offering more in the way of design flair and power. Yet the T5's setup flexibility and welcome self-control make it very easy to recommend. A bit like the G1, in fact ●

→ Specifications

Drive unit: 1 x proprietary 8in massive excursion downward-firing woofer
Enclosure: Sealed
Frequency response: -6dB at 32Hz
Onboard power: 125W Class A/B
Remote control: NO
Dimensions: 267(w) x 299(h) x 299(d)mm
Weight: 11.7kg
Connections: Single phono for LFE input; single phono for low-level input; Neutrik SpeakON socket for high-level input

HCC VERDICT

REL T5 → £450 Approx
→ Supplier: www.rel.net
→ Tel: 01656 768 777

Highs: Small, compact and potent; good self-control; simultaneous connections

Lows: Size limits the level of room pressurisation it can achieve

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5