

Sonique Audio

THUNDERBOX 1200 SUBWOOFER



Any half-competent audio designer can build a good subwoofer. But it may well be a cube of a metre on each side and cost ten grand. The big challenge is to build a good subwoofer that can be manufactured to a good price point, and one that will leave a little space in the room for you to enjoy it.

That's what Sonique Audio, the South Australian speaker builder, has been working on lately. The result is the Thunderbox 1200, its first model selling for less than \$1000. But if you have a few hundred extra to spare, you can buy the SE version which comes in a more expensive finish, has a lead-lined cabinet and is provided with spikes.

Equipment

We, however, were supplied with the standard Thunderbox 1200 for review. This comes in a mid sized cabinet measuring 358 x 458 x 443 mm (WHD). Finished in a plain black vinyl-look paint, the forward firing driver is covered by a black cloth grille with a bottom edge attractively sculpted to expose the twin front-firing bass-reflex ports. These have flared openings to reduce air-flow noise.

The construction from 19 mm thick MDF, with additional 25 mm MDF internal brack-

ing, contributes to the unit's 22 kilograms of weight. It is raised very slightly from the floor by stick-on rubber feet.

The driver is a 300mm unit with a rubber roll-surround and fibre impregnated paper cone. To assist with heat dispersion and power handling, it also has a vented pole piece and an aluminium voice-coil former. And just in case things get really heavy, it also has a rear bump plate to reduce the likelihood of damage from over-excitation.

The actual diameter of the driver cone is 231 mm, yielding a driving area of 420 cm².

This gets shoved to and fro by the internal amplifier which is rated for 128 watts of peak power and incorporates driver protection circuitry. The usual controls are provided, including a phase reversal switch. The subwoofer has automatic on/off switching or can be manually switched on or off.

Sonique Audio Thunderbox 1200

✈ **3 years (including electronics)**

- Excellent value
- Good general performance
- Excellent connectivity options

- Purchasers could consider removing the rubber feet and adding after-market spikes

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Circle 1061 on our Reader Service Card.

Both line and speaker level inputs and outputs are provided. The outputs all have high-pass filters built in, making them suitable for use with satellite speakers, but not for daisy chaining to full range main speakers. If this

use is required, the subwoofer should be wired in parallel to the main speakers.

Performance

We connected the Thunderbox 1200 into what will be its most commonly used configuration: plugged into the subwoofer output of a home theatre receiver. Balancing was straight forward. We found that the middle position of the level control required only a couple of decibels of adjustment for the right bass level for two different receivers.

We listened to a broad range of material, including both DVD movies and CDs, and found that the Sonique Thunderbox 1200 produced a very satisfying result. It is actually quite a musical and dynamic performer, and perfectly capable of high volume levels within its frequency range.

It certainly covered all the musically important material, down to the 32 Hz fundamental of large pipe organs (although not the 16 Hz of the very biggest ones). The opening tone of 'Surround Madness v5.1.03' from the *Telarc 5.1 DTS Surround Sampler* CD was missing, which isn't surprising since it is mostly in the 10 Hz region.

Despite Sonique's modest claim of a 33 Hz bottom limit, in our listening room we found that the actual peak output at in the listening chair was just under 35 Hz, and the -6 dB point was at 27 Hz. The subwoofer remained tight and controlled across this frequency span and was particularly attractive with bass rock guitar.

The subwoofer also managed to provide very high levels of output without rattles, suiting it to the kerthumps delivered by movies, such as the newly released 5.1-channel remastered version of *The Terminator*.

Conclusion

Sonique Audio's hard work in developing this subwoofer has paid off for the customer, with a very solid subwoofer at an excellent price and with a satisfyingly strong performance. **Bb**