

SONIQUE THUNDERBOX 1200 ACTIVE SUBWOOFER

FEATURES

Anti-resonant shielding
350 mm diameter low range driver
Anti-resonant MDF cabinet
128 watts into 8 ohms power rating
Heavy duty low range driver
No-loss protection system

PROS

Outstanding value for money
Smooth detailed sound character
Honest and clean low end response
Special Edition upgrade option available

CONS

None!

SPECS

Frequency Range: 33-240Hz
Power Output: 120 watts into 8 ohms.
Dimensions: 358 x 485 x 443 mm
Weight: 22 kg

DISTRIBUTOR

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RATINGS

Performance	8.5/10
Build quality	8.5/10
Operation	8.5/10
Features	8.5/10
Value	9/10

Sonique is an Adelaide based speaker manufacturer who in a short space of time has quietly gained a rep for designing excellent speakers that are often the envy of the industry. It's a company that gives sensible, conservative names to its products: the home theatre range is called the SAV series (for Sonique Audio-Video) and the hi-end hi-fi speakers are described simply by numbers (the 4.5, 5.5 and so on) with models like the Encore thrown in.

Then there's the new active subwoofer from Sonique - the Thunderbox. The Thunderbox 1200 to be exact and, true to name, it's creating a lot of noise in home theatre circles at present. It joins the two existing Sonique subwoofers - the SAV SUB and SLAVE models.

The Thunderbox can be considered a large product, but not as unsightly or unwieldy as many subwoofers. Considering its performance and sheer capacity to create low bass, it's relatively compact. This is an active subwoofer, which means it has an in-built amplifier and doesn't rely on power from the A-V receiver or amplifier.

Sonique has used its experience in creating excellent high-end equipment to give the Thunderbox a high degree of sonic sophistication without comprising features. I get the impression it's a subwoofer designed for home theatre, though you can use it as a subwoofer in music systems.

The appearance of the Thunderbox is quite plain, but impressive nonetheless. When you remove the grille you see a 305 mm woofer and even when the grille is in place large twin reflex ports tell you that there's the possibility of some real low end grunt. The rear panel has a metal panel housing a plethora of connection facilities and volume level and crossover point controls.

There are RCA line level inputs and outputs for left and right channels and a bunch of gold plated five way binding posts that cater for high-level inputs and outputs. You'll likely use the live levels for driving in home theatre system and the 5-

ways if you're using the unit on a sub-satellite music system.

The level control does what it says it does and the crossover adjusts the connection point between the sub and the rest of the system and is adjusted according to the type of input source (movie, music) and the type of speakers used and overall effect desired. Both controls work as advertised.

There's also an on/off switch with a position labelled auto which engages an auto power-on mode, where the unit switches power through to itself when it senses that a movie or music signal is being sent to it. I know people like this feature, but I tend to switch subs on and off manually as I need them.

The driver is about as bullet proof as they come. It uses a fibre impregnated paper cone, has a vented pile piece and aluminium voice coil former and a rear bump plate to prevent over excursion. It's powered by a robust 128 watt power amplifier and has a no-loss protection system built in.

In situ it was married to Sonique front, centre and rear speakers from the SAV range and with two systems from competing manufacturers. It was driven by the unbeatable Onkyo 989 receiver and 939 DVD player. I used a variety of DVD titles for the audition and for effect - *Gone in 60*

Seconds, Any Given Sunday, The Matrix, End of Days and Fifth Element - then just sat around enjoying the way it completed virtually any "at home" entertainment listening and viewing experience. It works brilliantly with the Sonique system in a reasonably large room and is versatile enough to be used in any other-brand system.

This subwoofer produces copious amounts of low bass but it isn't marred, as is sometimes the case with other products in this area of the market, by a hump in the upper or a one-note dominance effect. The Thunderbox 1200's response is smooth, flat and extended. What's more it's quite excellent in allowing low end dynamic interplay (the stuff that gives subwoofers a musical character and which is so often missing).

The Thunderbox 1200 goes loud and hard. It's capable of seat-shaking slam and fantastic recovery afterwards yet is smooth and accurate enough for hi-fi music. It's also just cheap enough so you could consider buying two ... and then be prepared to be evicted for noise pollution.

Like many Sonique products, the Thunderbox 1200 can be bought in a Special Edition version which features a balanced timber veneered cabinet with a special window bracing system, extra anti-resonant treatment, lead lining, floor spikes, and components picked for even closer tolerance performance and operation.

I reckon that if your budget will stretch you should pay the small amount for the Special Edition option. You get an even better looking, better performing version of an already superbly engineered and performing piece of home theatre gear.

Whatever option you choose, this particular version is the most versatile sub-\$1,000 sub I have heard to date. It's made in Australia so your dollar buys a true dollar's worth of value and it's easily my reference for anything at and above the asking price.

