roduct. <u>review</u>



"NUCLEAR SUB ...

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"You will reach the limit of what you think is sane far sooner than you will find any limit in the SUB 2." by Adam Rayner

R eally big subwoofers are my guilty pleasure, and I've tested some doozies in my time. Yet above a certain level, you have to go visit them if you don't own a house big enough. So I had to head to the recent *Sound & Vision* show in Bristol to review a subwoofer so huge it might have been an issue getting it installed in my house. The beast in question? Paradigm's extraordinary Signature SUB 2.

This wasn't necessarily because of its physical size (it's not as massive as, say, SVS' cylindrical PC13-Ultra) but because it weighs over sixteen and a half stones — or over 100 kg if you're one of those metric types.

The Signature SUB 2 is a stumpy hexagonal spud with three faces with grilles and three that are just wood panels. Under each grille reside two 10-inch woofers, making this a six-driver subwoofer. Also, these drivers are as defiantly bonkers as any I've met - what I call 'weapons-grade' woofers. Each has two corrugated bottom suspensions called a spider, and the top roll surround suspension is very special. The latter was designed by an engineer who mused while he shaved that the gooseneck support of his shaving mirror kept roundness even as it bent in all directions. His wife thought he was doing a nutter-out-of-Close-Encountersof-the-Third-Kind thing, mumbling to himself while shaving. But it resulted in the Signature SUB 2's Finite Element Analysis (FEA)-optimised mega-rubbery injection moulded suspension.



Shown: Piano Black

"... a megalomaniacal 4,500 W continuous power amplifier can be hooked up to the speakers — yet the cabinet is so well self-damped with equal and opposite forces that you can place a glass of water on top of it and see how it doesn't ripple the water while it booms." Add in the ten-layer long-excursion voice coils, and it means that a megalomaniacal 4,500 W continuous power amplifier can be hooked up to the speakers, which is what Paradigm has generously shoved inside its flagship woofer. Yet the cabinet is so well selfdamped with equal and opposite forces that you can place a glass of water on top of it and see how it doesn't ripple the water while it booms.

AV/CV

Product:

Absurdly monstrous and profound in output, this has extreme 10 inch transducers on 4.5 kilowatts

Position:

The biggest baddest subwoofer from the top range of a very high-end speaker maker

Peers:

Wilson Audio Thor's Hammer; Krell Master Reference subwoofer; Adire Audio Parthenon

HOW LOW CAN YOU GO?

The performance figures of this atom bomb of a woofer are worth stressing. It'll drop as low as 7 Hz, will hit 112 db at a 10 Hz cycles and can raise 126 dB at 60 Hz.

"... taut accuracy ..."

Paradigm's public demos were impressive, and allowed me to feel the taut accuracy of the bass and appreciate the room correction system from fellow Canadians, Anthem. When lunchtime came I was allowed to play about with it myself. A few stalwarts stayed despite a warning. Like Jeremy Clarkson that time he blew the tyres on the Bentley, I unleashed hell upon it.

"I cranked the living heck out of the front end — the track wobbled, yet the SUB 2 ate it for lunch ..."

My test disc was More Bass, More Boom, More Bottom, a brilliant CD which drops right down to below 10 Hz. It begins with an Americanaccented voiceover warning you about stuff, segues into curse-ridden rapper-style cautions, and then tries to launch the cones out of your subwoofer.

"... the resident projector screen started to flap visibly as the room over-pressured. The air vent in the concrete ceiling began to rattle, growl and drop dead flies and debris on the heads of those below, and I saw fear in the eyes of the present public."

I cranked the living heck out of the front end to 15 dB above the point the Paradigm team felt was 'maximum' for public demos. The track wobbled, yet the SUB 2 ate it for lunch. The resident projector screen started to flap visibly as the room over-pressured. The air vent in the concrete ceiling began to rattle, growl and drop dead flies and debris on the heads of those below, and I saw fear in the eyes of the present public. It was embarrassing but felt good, and I did it for you.

"... an absolute Reference Status subwoofer, and I love it."

I was a bit ashamed for inflicting this upon the Paradigm chaps, including their Marketing Manager Mark Aling, over from Canada. Looking up, expecting a negative response to my behaviour, all I got was sardonic amusement and a request for a copy of the disc!

"The sub could even double as a bit of designer furniture"

NO LIMITS

The simple fact is I couldn't stress this product in any way. You will reach the limit of what you think is sane far sooner than you will find any limit in the Signature SUB 2. It's an absolute Reference Status subwoofer, and I love it. Of course, at the price, it's at the upper end of home cinema gear and may be out of your price range. The good news is that Paradigm also makes the Signature Sub 1, which uses 8-inch drivers instead of 10-inch ones and 'only' 1,700W of power, in the same super-high-quality enclosure and with equal attention to detail.



HCC VERDICT

Signature SUB 2 Highs: Limitless power; huge speed; awesome control; beautiful engineering Lows: Costly; spoils your enjoyment of lesser systems; risks genuine structural damage

