

A good active **subwoofer** can make a big difference to both your music and movie sound. Not getting enough bass in your life? Try one of these babies for size...

Test Express

SUBWOOFERS £469 – £650

Add some low-end to your life

Monitor Audio RS W12



£650

WE'VE SEEN THE RS W12 before – it's part of the Award-winning RS6 AV surround speaker package – but this is its first solo outing. Beautifully finished in real-wood veneer, it's the most compact sub in this test, but don't let those diminutive dimensions fool you. The Monitor Audio might be small, but it hits hard, courtesy of its stiff, heavy, sealed-box cabinet, long-throw magnesium/aluminium drive unit and spectacular power: 500 watts is claimed, and it certainly sounds like it.

Set-up is fairly simple. There are no speaker-level connections – which makes connecting into a hi-fi amp more tricky (although not impossible) – and no remote, but otherwise, there's little to get heated about.

Sofa-shaking action definitely on the menu

Once wired and warmed, the Monitor Audio swiftly settles into its groove. It's a fast and articulate listen: The Chemical Brothers' *Block Rockin' Beats* pounds out with accuracy and savage intent, the rhythm accurately timed even at neighbour-unfriendly volumes.

Available in a range of real-wood veneers, this is one sub you won't have to hide



Much like a powerful car running at motorway speeds, the RS W12 sounds effortless: turn up the wick, and it simply gets louder, in a linear, progressive way. With *King Kong*, especially during the T-Rex sequence, the results border on the awesome for the money.

In short, we've no hesitation in giving this Monitor Audio a big fat thumbs up.

FOR

Dramatic levels of extension and drive; fast, agile balance; great timing and punch; beautiful cabinet finish; fairly small

AGAINST

The priciest subwoofer here; lacks a remote control; no speaker-level connections

VERDICT

Brilliant: a fine, fun subwoofer that plays both music and movies with terrific energy and authority very solid buy if you specify better speakers

FACTS AND FIGURES

PRICE RANGE £230 – £380	MONITOR AUDIO RS W12	NHT TEN	QUAD L-ITE	VELODYNE CHT-12R
SPECIFICATION				
PRICE	£ 650	£ 515	£ 550	£ 469
POWER OUTPUT	500 watts	150 watts	300 watts	200 watts
DRIVER (CM)	30	25	25	30
FREQ. RESPONSE	21Hz – 120Hz	31Hz – 180Hz	25Hz – 95Hz	25 – 120Hz
CABINET (HWD, CM)	34 x 34 x 37	44 x 28 x 38	48 x 29 x 42	46 x 38 x 50
CABINET TYPE	Sealed, forward-firing	Ported, forward-firing	Sealed, downward-firing	Ported, forward-firing
LINE INPUTS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
SPEAKER INPUTS	No	No	Yes	Yes
LINE OUTPUTS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
SPEAKER OUTPUTS	No	No	No	Yes
PHASE INVERT	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
FINISHES	6	1	2	3
HOW THEY RATED				
SOUND	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
BUILD	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
VERDICT	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★

POWER OUTPUT Not, in itself, a measure of sound quality, not least because some manufacturers have a nasty habit of 'massaging' power ratings to make a product seem more impressive.

DRIVER A big drive unit shifts more air than a small one, but shifting air is not the only part of the equation. Amplifier power and cabinet design can also play a massive role in deciding sound quality.

CABINET TYPE Ported cabinets tend to produce bigger bass for a given cabinet size, drive unit complement and amplifier power, but they can also sound slower and less articulate.

TEST RESULT

Four super subs, but only one overall winner – Monitor Audio's RS W12

THERE ARE FOUR fine subwoofers on test here, and choosing between them is far from easy. The NHT falls by the wayside first: it still has considerable merit, but the Quad beats it for value.

The £469 Velodyne, meanwhile, remains an outstanding buy. If £500 is your ceiling, you can't go wrong here.

The Quad L-ite is a real cracker: it's good value, sounds great and will work well in most rooms. However, despite costing an extra £100, our winner is the Monitor Audio. The RS W12 combines the key attributes of its two best rivals into one fantastic whole: it's small and fast like the Quad, yet massively powerful and capable of real depth, like the Velodyne. That makes it the ideal all-rounder, and a great buy.