

# THE TEST

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# WHY NOT SUBS?

Subs aren't just about huge bass. Buy the right speaker and get a great, balanced, sound...

Once you've experienced an ICE system with a good subwoofer you'll never want to go back. It doesn't matter if you like your cheesy pop, metal, dance or rock, a sub gives a lower bass that fills the sound and makes any track more complete. So even if pounding bass lines aren't your bag, a sub should be. The 12in sub is the most popular size and can be found in Sound Quality and SPL cars alike. In this test we've rounded up 12 of the best to help you find your perfect cone.

## 5 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT SUBS

- 1** Sub woofer, or sub, is the name for the largest speakers in a car which are designed to play only the bass notes.
- 2** Subs need lots of power, so you'll need a separate amp. This can be either from a multi-channel amp or a single channel amp.
- 3** To ensure only the bass notes go to the subs you'll need either a specific sub output on your head unit or a crossover function on your amp.
- 4** Subs come in different sizes, usually from 6in to 15in. Smaller subs tend to give a lighter sound while larger units will give more power.
- 5** Most subs come in 4 Ohm models but 2 and 8 Ohm versions are available. The idea is to get your overall resistance to match your amp's optimum for power. So if your amp draws the most power at 2 Ohm you could match it with one 2 Ohm sub, or two 4 Ohm subs. Just be careful not to have speakers with a lower Ohm value than your amp.

### TEST TACTICS



### THE GEAR

To make sure we could get the most accurate results we used our trusty ICE test car for the process. Our friends at ICE direct (ice-direct.com) fitted the Renault Clio Renaultsport 197 with all the best equipment to provide a result you can trust. We then listened to Bass Mechaniks Faster, Harder, Louder track from the Bass Race Vol3 competition CD. Let the testing begin.



### THE IDIOT

Our very own Dr Von Eerzarherlen decided to extend the test with an innovative use of cheesy snacks. Armed with a tape measure and very questionable vision he set about trying to record how high the orange coloured snacks jumped when placed on a sub at high volume. What a complete twat.



**ORION COBALT £45**

If you're looking for your first taste of bass at a budget price this is the one for you. Speaker-side it looks stylish with blue lettering on top of black and a brushed aluminium finish. Behind the scenes the build is fairly basic but does the job, while the sound impresses. This sub kicks out well over the estimated 200w and will add real depth to your system.

**THE RESULTS**

Actual reading:  
335w RMS  
SPL: 133.7  
Sound: ★★★★★  
Value: ★★★★★  
Overall: ★★★★★

**THE DOC'S RESULTS**

'Zese fluffy snacks leapt about like greasy teenagers at a Slipknot gig, but I only measured 2 inches in height.'

**KICKER 07CVR122 £120**

This 2 Ohm version comes with a dual voice coil, though it does still feature a steel basket rather than a cast aluminium structure. Unfortunately, the cone design

looks a little dated and despite it being a 2 Ohm sub the power reading and SPL were fairly low. The sound was also less defined than many on test.

**THE RESULTS**

Actual reading:  
201.6w RMS  
SPL: 130.1  
Sound: ★★★★★  
Value: ★★★★★  
Overall: ★★★★★

**THE DOC'S RESULTS**

'Zese ones don't want to play so much. Zey won't jump for daddy.'

**THE RESULTS**

Actual reading:  
270w RMS  
SPL: 139  
Sound: ★★★★★  
Value: ★★★★★  
Overall: ★★★★★

**BEST £100-£150**

**THE DOC'S RESULTS**

'The sound is impressive but the Wotsits rating is quite low. Less than 2 inches on zis puppy.'

**MTX ROAD THUNDER RT12AV £130**

This MTX Road Thunder is the exception on this test as it has its own enclosure. This should mean it has been set up to match the speaker but at £130 for the lot,

you'd expect the quality to be lower. Certainly the power and Ohm ratings are nothing to shout about, but the sound quality is really impressive.

**MUTANT MT1207X £60**

This is Mutant's mid-range sub yet it's still light on your pocket. The single X range includes a 10in, 12in and 15in, all at less than £70. This one features a funky basket

design on the back and a woven effect black cone on the front. The sound was respectable, the SPL score decent and it managed to top its power measurements too.

**THE RESULTS**

Actual reading:  
430w RMS  
SPL: 135.1  
Sound: ★★★★★  
Value: ★★★★★  
Overall: ★★★★★

**BEST UNDER £100**

**THE DOC'S RESULTS**

'I voz most pleased with ze results on zis. My little cheesy maize children danced high on the Fusion sub.'

**FLI FREQUENCY 12 £45**

This FLI unit is entry level but looks and sounds anything but budget. The front is finished in shades of grey and features a small but subtle fly image on the polypropylene cone. Look closer and you find they're

really nicely finished and would suit a dark install. We tested these FLI's in their own custom enclosure and the sound was all the better for it. They pushed a lot of air through the car and filled the bass range nicely.

**THE DOC'S RESULTS**

'I filled ze cone viz crispy goodness and made one speaker volcano. Most impressive!'

**THE RESULTS**

Actual reading:  
289w RMS  
SPL: 136.4  
Sound: ★★★★★  
Value: ★★★★★  
Overall: ★★★★★

If you're not testing your subs with Wotsits you're doing it wrong

I prefer ze 14-inch, it makes my eyes cross

**THE DOC'S RESULTS**

'I woz called Mutant at kindergarten - kids can be cruel. Ziz one didn't give the monster height I was hoping for.'

**THE RESULTS**

Actual reading:  
321w RMS  
SPL: 133.2  
Sound: ★★★★★  
Value: ★★★★★  
Overall: ★★★★★

**FUSION REACTOR RE-SW120 £60**

Fusion have toned down on their signature green but the design is still as sharp thanks to a new design embossed in black on the dust cap. In fact the whole unit

feels really well put together. When it came down to the sound the bass was punchy, tight and felt considerably louder than most in this price range.

**ALPINE SWR-1242D TYPE R £130**

From Alpine's much respected Type-R range this sub is spec'd well beyond its price. The design is clean and simple, with a large red R logo across the cone. Sadly the sound isn't as clean as the look but it gave a linear performance with some great low-end response and plenty of air movement through the car.

**THE RESULTS**

Actual reading: 536w RMS  
SPL: 133.6  
Sound: ★★★★★  
Value: ★★★★★  
Overall: ★★★★★

**THE DOC'S RESULTS**

'Oh I like zis baby - it gives me at least 4 inches.'



**THE RESULTS**

Actual reading: 432w RMS  
SPL: 131.7  
Sound: ★★★★★  
Value: ★★★★★  
Overall: ★★★★★

**THE DOC'S RESULTS**

'Jah, it haz some good boom, but the cheese dance is disappointing.'

**CLARION 3093HX £130**

The 3093HX features a glassfibre cone that has been blended with titanium for rigidity. It only uses a single 4 Ohm voice coil but does feature a hefty strontium magnet on the back. As a result the sound is loud and punchy but doesn't have the low-end performance and clarity of some higher-end subwoofers.

**THE RESULTS**

Actual reading: 279w RMS  
SPL: 134  
Sound: ★★★★★  
Value: ★★★★★  
Overall: ★★★★★

**THE DOC'S RESULTS**

'Jah, I'm getting much dancing of the watts but not so high zis time.'



**JL AUDIO 12 W3V3 £180**

JL are proud of their unique technologies and this model features at least six patented designs, from the floating cone attachment to the trim ring. The resulting sound is impressive with a very linear drop on tone, plus a dynamic and punchy sound with plenty of impact. A great listen, just not the most powerful.

**HIFONICS OLM2412 £270**

Hifonics' Olympus range is designed for high-level performance. This model comes with dual 2 Ohm voice coils, a double stacked magnet and an aluminium speaker frame. The result? This is one loud sub which comes a close second in the SPL scores to the Vibe. It also held the really low notes well.

**THE RESULTS**

Actual reading: 1488w RMS  
SPL: 138.8  
Sound: ★★★★★  
Value: ★★★★★  
Overall: ★★★★★

**THE DOC'S RESULTS**

'Zese babies jump so high, I can catch zem in my mouth man!'



**THE RESULTS**

Actual reading: 1890w RMS  
SPL: 138.1  
Sound: ★★★★★  
Value: ★★★★★  
Overall: ★★★★★

**THE DOC'S RESULTS**

'The sound is impressive but the Watsits rating seems quite low. Less than 2 inches on zis puppy.'

**MASSIVE DMX12 £450**

The DMX12 is a serious bit of kit and designed for seriously high-end systems. It features four voice coils, each at 1 Ohm, a cast basket, double stacked magnet and woven carbon fibre cone. The sound is loud, clear and there's no drop off throughout the tones on the track. If you can afford it, this is an awesome bit of kit.



**VIBE SPACE II 12 £160**

The Space II is a fresh, modern looking speaker finished in silver and black, and is the only sub-£200 unit boasting 1000w RMS. In practice though, it not only reached this, it smashed it. Reaching 1430w and pumping a massive 141.8spl, making it the loudest here by a full 3spl. Well worth a listen.

**THE RESULTS**

Actual reading: 1430w RMS  
SPL: 141.8  
Sound: ★★★★★  
Value: ★★★★★  
Overall: ★★★★★

**OVERALL WINNER**

**THE DOC'S RESULTS**

'I've used Flamin Hot watts on zis one und the deep tones are strong. Dance cheesy friendz, dance!'



**THE VERDICT**

It really is an eye opener (or ear opener) just how much difference there is between sub woofers. Although you tend to expect more money buys you better sound, it's not until you've heard a sub that you appreciate what you're paying for. But that's not to say you have to spend a fortune. Our under £300 units all gave great performances and the Fusion Reactor is an absolute bargain. And while we're talking bargains the MTX package really performs well, and seeing as it comes in an enclosure it is an absolute steal. Our overall favourite though has to be the Vibe, it's ridiculously loud yet still gives a clear sound despite being the cheapest in its class. We've also learnt, though tasty, Watsits are not a reliable way to test watts or bass for that matter. Er, thanks for your help Doc!

Death by Watsits. Wat a way to go

