

BK Electronics

P12-300SB subwoofer



THE NAME BK Electronics might not carry a huge amount of kudos in hi-fi terms, but a closer look at its history suggests that it deserves a higher profile. The Essex-based engineering firm was employed by REL founder Richard Lord to build many early models and while this relationship has now ended, it has continued to produce a large range of subwoofers that it sells directly.

The P12-300SB is the latest and the first in the Platinum series. The sub is built around a 12in driver, which features a doped paper cone and a whopping magnet. This is powered by a 300W onboard amplifier which is a class A/B unit in contrast to the rather more common use of Class D by rivals.

The enclosure is sealed and the P12 can be ordered with the driver forward facing or as tested here in a downward-firing configuration. The latter model is going to work best on a solid floor and needs no space around it, while the forward-firing one is better on a suspended floor, but needs more space to breathe.

So solid crew

This doesn't really tell the whole story, though. For the asking price, this is a very substantial piece of engineering indeed. The cabinet is made of inch-thick MDF and feels immensely solid and very heavy. The finish is excellent too. There are gloss and real wood finishes available for a premium, but the satin white of the review sample is rather lovely and does a reasonable job of disguising the considerable size of the BK. At 40cm across the footprint and 46cm tall, this is a fairly large sub at the price.

As well as good fundamentals, the P12-300SB should be of particular interest to anyone looking to use it in a 2.1 system. Alongside RCA phono connections the BK is fitted with a Neutrik-style speaker cable connector, which is highly regarded for use in 2.1 setups. There is also a continuously variable phase control and separate volume controls for the high and low inputs. BK then goes on to supply good-quality

connection cables as well. The lack of any remote control functionality and the absence of any onboard EQ functions are bearable omissions considering the price.

Connected to a Cambridge Audio Azur 851A (*HFC 359*) via the supplied Neutrik cable and partnered with a pair of Neat Iotas (*HFC 357*), it makes a very positive impression. With a 60Hz crossover set on the BK, the handover between sub and speakers is extremely well managed and the P12-300SB does a fantastic job of matching the speed and detail of the Neats. The Iota is an especially fast and vivid loudspeaker and the very fact that the BK can keep up at all is worthy of note but it not only manages to stay with the Neats, it also matches the intensity and life they bring to the performance.

With tracks with significant low end like *Leave A Trace* by Chrches, the BK is capable of extending effortlessly below where the Neats run out of puff, but does so with a refinement that is rare in a sub at this price. There is detail and tonal colour to the performance that makes it more than a simple bass generator. With the enormous and complex low end of the *Pacific Rim* score, it is able to comfortably cope with the twin demands of the strings and brass

while also handling the driving lower bassline with absolute control. There is no sign of bloat or overhang evident, simply deep, clean and dynamic bass.

Clip joint

The BK isn't completely viceless. Even though the phase control is very clever, it works better on axis with the speakers rather than tucked away in a convenient corner. There are limits to the output as well. Pushed very hard it can begin to clip, but you will be likely to receive an ASBO before you regularly hit this level. The gain ramp also seems to be very slightly different to the 851A, which means that the output of the BK isn't always completely matched to the Cambridge, but this could just as easily be the output of the Neat speakers not being completely linear as well.

These minor concerns don't detract from what is a very fine subwoofer at an incredibly competitive price. The BK is one of the most agile, tuneful and hard hitting subwoofers you can buy anywhere near this price and it is particularly well suited to use in a 2.1-system. In a stereo system, this is one of the very finest sub-£500 options on the market and represents exceptional value. **ES**

DETAILS

PRICE
£380
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OUR VERDICT

