

Monolithic sub is heavy going

As its name suggests, BK's Monolith-DF is large, solid and very hard to lift. Adam Rayner strains a muscle and wobbles his world...



BK Electronics' history is in making and supplying electronics for other manufacturers in many markets, including home hi-fi, professional public address and, especially, amplification for pro cinema use. In the past the brand has worked with REL to both help design and produce some of its subwoofer products, and thus it has an inside track when it comes to good practice in sub bass system design.

The box reviewed here is a simple ported unit, but has been tuned so carefully that it works as one of what we in the car bass trade call a 'magic box' – a combination of proportions and subwoofer driver that works so well, it is head and shoulders above others that look like they should work as well, but don't.

BK knows about rigidity and internal bracing; it knows about control of

overloading amps into speakers; and it knows the benefits of solid handcrafting building techniques. All are exhibited in this wonderful piece of kit.

Setup and build

Meant to be unpacked by two people, the Monolith-DF is big enough to arrive on a wee wooden pallet. Inside the box is the large wooden slab that is the Monolith. A single carved 'M' on the front is all the branding apparent. You also get a set of steel bright 8mm spike assemblies, a 5M hank of quality cable with a Neutrik Speakon plug on one end, and a 5M stereo phono lead with gold-plated plugs.

BK suggests this accessories pack would set you back some £45 at retail. Both M&J and REL include a Speakon wire, but the included phono wire tends to be a thin reedy cheapie compared the meaty item in here. Of course, an effective manual is part of the package.

Connection is simple. You simply run the phono lead from the LFE output of your amp or receiver to the phono input of the sub. As the LFE output on my system is mono, I used an inexpensive 'Y' lead to split the feed into two. Users can also wire up the sub at speaker level, although this isn't necessary for home theatre use. There's also an XLR socket with three pins for the luxury balanced connection method used by posher or more pro-oriented rigs. There's a gain knob for each input and a fully variable 0-180° phase knob in addition to the frequency selector for the crossover

RATINGS

Highs: Seriously high SPL; fantastic depth and melodic control
Lows: Bulky and difficult to manoeuvre. No pretty glass top or front LED

Slam	★★★★★
Depth	★★★★½
Precision	★★★★½
OVERALL	★★★★½

section. I gather there is an automatic speaker limitation circuit onboard, but despite some horrid abuse I doled out, I couldn't make it apparent, nor could I make it make anything other than the sort of noise it ought to.

Performance

I tested the sub a variety of material including my old *Antz* DVD, as the soundtrack is so cool – and their Central Part fountain is called the Monolith!

There are some great basso drops, throbs and rumbles in the film. One huge moment is when Princess Bala and the character Zee, voiced by Woody Allen, find themselves unwittingly upon the back of a massive Praying Mantis that simply stands up. The whole room wobbles and my wife complained that the windows in the kitchen were rattling in their alloy frames.

The sub's output is vast; deep, luscious and lovely. It has a superb melodic ability to follow a bassline in the soundtrack, and can do rapid stops and starts with nary a hangover at all, which at the levels this thing can play is remarkable. It can take a while to get the balance of level from your LFE and that feeding from the speaker level input correct but once set, this is a treat.

SPECIFICATIONS

ITEM	DETAILS
<i>BK Monolith-DF</i>	
Drive units	Long throw 12in proprietary design with double magnets and paper pulp cone.
Enclosure type	Braced, 95 litre, down-firing, ported, 25mm veneered MDF
Frequency response	20Hz (-3dB), 15Hz in-room, to crossover point
Onboard Power	300W RMS from onboard Mosfet amp
Dimensions	40(w) x 604(h) x 420(d)mm
Weight	46.75kg

Connections Gastight Neutrik Speakon connector for high level input two RCA sockets for LFR/Low level connection and balanced XLR single socket input

Tried & Tested...



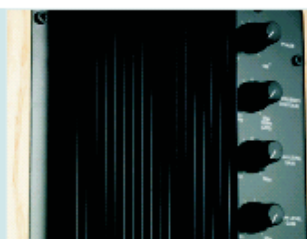
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arrive on a wee wooden pallet'**

I found it hard to grasp the lack of difference between the sound output of the mighty Monolith, at some £407, and that of my resident £2,500 REL. The former uses a 12in driver and port, the latter a 10in driver pushed by the same amount of Watts, but uses Acoustic Resistive Matrix bracing which effectively allows the REL to act as though it has three separate enclosures. The REL goes a few cycles deeper (only a few) and does

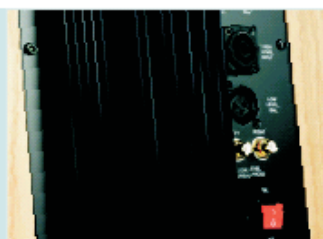
have amazing control only nearly emulated by the Monolith. A car analogy would be a Subaru Impreza all over a Ferrari like a rash.

Conclusion

This subwoofer can be considered an outstanding buy – maybe even the best value for money currently in domestic electronics. It comes recommended, without caveat ■



Despite the knobbery, this is an easy sub to control..



... you just hook up the LFE feed from your amp to one of the inputs