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Subwoofers

Earthquake Sound SuperNova MKIV-12P Subwoofer:

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The main body of the sub—a 15-inch cube with a heavy-duty polyurethane hard-shell finish—weighs 69 pounds. (The black-ash model, with a Plexiglas top cover, weighs 5 pounds more.) The sub's walls are 0.75-inch MDF, reinforced at the joints by 1-inch pine blocks. At Sahyoun's urging, I set up the SuperNova by ear instead of by test disc. He says the best crossover setting is usually between the 1 o'clock and 2 o'clock positions (about 100 to 110 Hz) and that the volume should never exceed 12 o'clock. The latter is particularly sound advice. This sub plays loud enough (over 100 dB) to damage your hearing. Remember, a jet airplane taking off generates 125 dB of sound.



The SuperNova might display some of the behavioral characteristics of a sealed design, but it is harder to set up. To lock in the sound, you'll have to move it a little this way and a little that way. Before you start, decide if you want the full bottom-end benefit for home theater or a slightly less-extended low end with a more-agile response that's suited to music. To get the all-out sonic blast, the passive radiator should face the nearest side wall and sit about 5 inches from it. Of course, if you place the SuperNova against the left wall, the control panel will stare out into your room. If you place the sub in a corner, with the passive radiator facing the intersection of the two walls, the SuperNova loses some slam but picks up speed, which is better for music.

I preferred the latter setup, but the movie setup is goose-bump material. The sonic impact was so overwhelming that I went back to home theater chestnuts like the train wreck in *The Fugitive* and the opening of *GoldenEye*. Just when you think you know a scene after seeing it 500 times . . .

This subwoofer took my home theater to new depths. Turn on a movie and watch the SLAPS-happy rubber fly. Va-va-voom. The "Time's Up" alien attack in *Independence Day* blew me away, even with the undersized but crystalline picture from Zenith's snazzy 15-inch ZLD15A1 LCD TV/

PC monitor. I knew the SuperNova was a different animal right away. Early in the break-in process, I left the remote control atop the sub. Within seconds, it was on the floor. The SuperNova is a mover and shaker, no question. Some owners of previous SuperNova editions were critical of their slow-as-the-IRS response with music. The SuperNova MKIV-12P might not be top-of-the-heap fast, but it's hardly slow. I tried this sub with an assortment of speakers, including a Snell system fronted by a pair of QBx 25 Towers. I also gave it several tests with small speakers: the Heybrook Series 2000, the PSB Alpha-AV, and finally the PSB Alpha B, an exciting new budget speaker so radically redesigned that PSB probably should have given it an altogether new designation. With its crossover frequency set at about 100 Hz, the SuperNova carried the smaller speakers' load. At about \$1,125 for five speakers, the new PSB Alpha B system and the SuperNova might seem unlikely partners, but it's a knockout system for about \$2,800.

When I played "I Thought About You," Diana Krall's offering to Ray Brown's *Some of My Best Friends Are . . . Singers*, there were times when the SuperNova placed Brown's bass lines in perfect context with the Alphas. It also passed a pop bass test, Steely Dan's "What a Shame About Me" from the Dolby Digital mix of the *Two Against Nature* DVD-Audio. DTS Entertainment's DVD-Audio edition of Steve Stevens' *Flamenco.A.Go.Go*, a press handout at the Home Entertainment 2001 Show, is a peculiar Gipsy-Kings-meets-Spyro-Gyra effort, and the bass on the 5.1 mix of "Our Man in Istanbul" illustrated what a difference the SuperNova's room position can make. In the movie setting, the sub plodded through "Istanbul." The music setup brought some relief—specifically, a quicker, more-complementary bottom end.

It doesn't have to be either/or with the SuperNova. The remote's volume control allows you to rapidly adjust bass output. (The optical sensor, it should be noted, picks up the signal from other remotes, too. So, if you don't place the sub out of the way, it will send out a slight thud each time you press any remote's volume control.) You could also use separate crossover points for music and movies—one (the higher) at the SuperNova and the other at your receiver or processor.

Although its status in the bass race gets all the attention—the SuperNova is now smaller and louder!—Earthquake seems to have hit a nice blend of power and speed with the MKIV-12P. Unless you're building a 1,500-seat amphitheater in your backyard, it's hard to imagine that you'd want anything louder. In case you do, though, there's the bigger and louder SuperNova MKIV-15P.



Highlights

- Boom-chukka-boom
- The fastest SuperNova yet

Article Continues: [HT Labs Measures](#) »

Company Info

Earthquake Sound
Web Site

SuperNova MKIV-12P Subwoofer
\$1,697

Dealer Locator Code EAR

(800) 576-7944

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