

hardware

legacy audio

Extreme HD Subwoofer

as reviewed by Gary Lea



I am not generally a fan of subwoofers. Not that I have anything against them I just find them to be a bit fussy to set up and I rarely feel that the effort yields results that make it worth the time. Not only that but they upset my sense of symmetry in my audio room. Often the sub sounds best at some obscure placement and stands out like a sore thumb.

So when Charlie Harrison approached me about reviewing a sub I was nonplused to say the least but since it came along with the wonderful Triton amp previously reviewed and the CED7/iDock I figured what the hell? Why not? I was not quite prepared for what came out of the box when it was delivered. As a matter of fact it stayed in the box for a couple weeks before I even unloaded it. When I did unload it my first thought was "Wow this thing is beautiful!"

At 28 x 18 x 18 and weighing in at 115lbs it is not a small piece (why is it that the guy with the really bad back and neck always draws these heavy weight pieces?). My review sample came in a charcoal automotive finish that is just perfectly matched to the somewhat art deco cabinet work and is so neutral it would fit in with any décor. The 15" Silver Graphite cone is bonded to an ultra-stiff Rohacell layer and driven by a massive 35lb. magnet structure. A high speed rubber suspension is incorporated with

GARY LEA'S SYSTEM

LOUDSPEAKERS

Von Schweikert VR4 MKIII,
Odeon Elektra Horns, Compact
WZSE Collector's Edition,
Usher 6311 and AAD Silver
Reference 1.

ELECTRONICS

Phone Stages: Goldnote
Pamphili, Blue Circle Fon Lo
Thingee, Muscal Fidelity V3,
Opera Consonance Reference
40, Koetsu Step up
transformer.

Amplification: Jolida Music
Envoy 211 tube mono block
amps and pre-amp, Almarro
A205A, Goldnote Demidoff
Silver Plus solid state amp.

SOURCES

Digital Front End: Cary Audio
DVD 6 used as a CD, Grant
Fidelity Reference Tube 1000,
Wadia i170 iPod Deck and
160Gig iPod.

Analogue Front End:
Nottingham Analogue Hyper
Space and Arm with Wave
Mechanic, Consonance Droplet
5.2 MKII with ST600 tonearm.
Koetsu Azure Platinum, Koetsu
Urushi Vermillion, Goldnote
Baldinotti, Dynavector 17D3
artridges.

CABLES

XLO Signature 3 interconnects,
speaker cables and power
cords (main cables currently).
Furutech DIY interconnects.
Kimber Cable Monocle XL
speaker cables and Select
Interconnects. And a bunch of
cables I am too lazy to list.

ACCESSORIES

Grant Fidelity RPF-120 MKII
Reference Power Conditioner.
Misc doodads and tweaks and
loose parts like all audiophiles.

a high temperature 3" voice-coil. The voice-coil lead wires are initially braided, then woven into the spider to prevent fatigue from heavy use.

The front mounted preamp control panel allows continuous adjustment of level, crossover frequency, and phase. A special blend EQ control assures perfect integration with your speaker system. The internal amplifier modules are the renowned ICEpower design. These extremely reliable, wideband units are of the same type used in Legacy Audio's flagship HELIX speaker system.



The 1000 watt Xtreme HD also incorporates a dynamic braking coil which utilizes driver back EMF to counter overshoot as the driver reverses direction or comes to a halt. Here are some more techno specs to whet your whistle:

Input Imped 10K, Phase adjust Cont. +/-180, Blend EQ +/- 12 dB
@45Hz, Max. SPL 120dB @1m, Low Pass Filter Slope 18 dB per
octave, Crossover 40-100. Range

It so happened that Hiram Toro of Koetsu USA was in Vegas and taking a moment to come by and listen to my Koetsu Azure Platinum cartridge after it was properly broken in. So I did the most logical thing I could think of and made him help me haul it in and move it around my room.



I first set it up directly in between the Von Schweikerts and fired it up. This is a very flexible sub and the front mounted controls, already mentioned, make it very easy to do small tweaks to the sub on the fly.

Once I felt I had the level, blend, and the crossover dialed in, we sat back and took an initial listen. Out of the box it did not draw undue attention to itself so at first blush, success. This is a fast, tightly controlled sub that you can dial in to fill in the bottom end of just about any small monitor or add that last tiny bit of pump for a speaker like the VSR4 MKIII. After about a week of listening to it off and on with the VSRs I moved a pair of Odeon monitors into the system and let them run in for a day and then began to experiment with positioning the sub to get the best blend. I left the sub in the original position for about two weeks and it worked admirably after I spent a good deal of time doing minute adjustments to the blending and crossover settings.

Once I felt I had them dialed in about as good as I was going to, I sat back and spent some real quality, late night listening to this setup. I found it filled in the missing bottom end rather well adding heft and punch to most every piece that played through the setup. As I said it did not draw undue attention to itself. One day I fired up the system and got a bit distracted and failed to turn on the sub. I sat down and fired off Marc Cohn's Perfect Love. It was startling evident that the sub was missing and at first I thought I had blown a fuse or something, but then upon inspection I noticed that I had left it off. Whew! The absence of the sub's participation in the listening experience was simply unnerving. I did not realize until it WASN'T there just how much it had added to the sonic balance of the system and how natural its contribution was. Needless to say I did not listen without it for the duration of the time Odeons were in the system.

Once I turned it on the first thing that jumped out at me was that the addition of the sub's bass made the whole track seem holographic in comparison. There is nothing that will raise goose bumps on your body quicker than a feeling of the musicians being in the room with you. The bass is exactly what fully brought that feeling into the music with the Odeons. It was palpable and real, and the air that now moved around the performers was tangible. The added weight brought a feel more so than a sound. I have always found it a bit hard to describe that phenomenon.

The real trick with a sub is where to best place it. If it is within sight of me, I want it in the middle. I am a man of symmetry, right, wrong, or indifferent. When things get out of the symmetrical positioning, it just grates on my nerves and is probably one of the reasons I don't employ subwoofers because, as fate would have it, they do not always sound the best centered between two speakers.

I began to experiment with placement within my largish room. First off was in the corner where there was lots of reinforcement and loss of detail and increased bloom. Next was right next to my main chair like a coffee table (no I didn't put drinks or anything else on it other than a vase on top of a doily). In this position it actually sounded as good as it did sitting in between the speakers. It also made it easier to tweak the controls since they are right next to you or to turn it off without getting out of your chair and risking spilling some wine or fine anejo tequila. Now that would be a much worse sin than setting something down on top of the sub!

It was suggested that I try it placed right behind the listening chair. Thank God I have a couple of extra sets of 20ft interconnects. I placed it directly behind my listening chair about 3 feet back. The room is 33ft long and the space is pretty empty; just another setup of a smaller system as a second listening room. I dialed down the level

a bit now that it was only three feet away. I plopped down with an album I had recently purchased featuring Wes Montgomery and a string ensemble, (*Fusion! The Incredible Guitar of Wes Montgomery with Strings*, Riverside (SMJ-6210). It is a very soothing and intimate album and one of the best of Wes' albums. I have quite a few and this one quickly rose to the top as an album to use while testing. The minute the cartridge sat down on the vinyl till it ran out of the lead-in track was magical. The bass was so much more interwoven in the very fabric of the music rather than that slight "added in" feeling it had prior. As the late Chris Farley would say, "Holy Shnikey"! It could be the size and shape of my room, the split in ceiling height or some other room anomaly, but it simply sounded "right".

I have now lived with it for six months. I really do notice when it is turned off. I even put it with my Samsung Theater in a box system. No laughing, it actually is a great little integrated system and it rocks the house. What it did for the movie soundtracks in that system is comparable to what Tina Turner does for spiked heels. It just made it sound right. Watching Pearl Harbor brought the entire battle right into our family room. The only thing that could have made it more realistic was for it to be in 3-D.

I have owned roughly half a dozen subs in my days. Some were small and passive and very quick, others were lumbering self powered behemoths that could barely get out of their own way. The Legacy is easily the best sub I have ever encountered. It is *lightningly* quick, easy to integrate and incredibly flexible. It seems to combine all the qualities of the best subs I have heard with relatively none of the downsides.

If you are in the market for a high quality sub that can offer you a great deal of flexibility, rhythm and pace and good looks to boot then call the folks at legacy. You won't be disappointed! **Gary Lea**

Extreme HD Subwoofer

Retail: \$3595 to \$4000 depending on finish

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