"... THESE PUPPIES ROCK ... A THRILL RIDE ... will knock your socks off."

Reprinted with permission from

SECRETS of Home Theater and High Fidelity
www.hometheaterhifi.com

Vol. 11, No. 3

"Paradigm has really hit the nail on the head ... Nice, clean sound that to my knowledge is now King of the Hill."

by Brian Weatherhead

I must have a reputation for loving bass. Rightfully so!

For the past few years I have truly enjoyed my subwoofers. I have a pair of them. They are in my opinion one of the best subs on the market.

If you read my home theater remodel article, you know that I needed (wanted) a change. Let me say it now, these Seismic subs are a change, and a good one at that (they perform beautifully, but in a small space).

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

I thought honestly that they had shipped me some other subwoofers by mistake. The boxes for these things were huge. Then when I opened them, I saw this small sub. Yet, it weighs almost 70 pounds. At least it passed the heavier is better test with flying colors.

And did I say small? I could easily stack three of these and still be under the visual load of one tube in my previous subwoofers. And that is why I wanted to try them out. My A/V room is not that big, and I longed for smaller sub footprints.

So, in went the pair of Seismics, and away we went. I ran some XLR cables from my AVM 20 processor and sat back for a thrill ride.

SETUP

Did I mention they sent two? Yeah, I know. So, I spent some time hunting around with my SPL meter for a couple of sweet spots. Turns out that just set back from the screen, they sounded the best. Once I found the sweet spot I used a 45 Hz test signal and an SPL meter in my listening position to adjust the phase to coordinate with the other pair already in the room. The Seismic back panel is well laid out, and simple to use. The auto-on feature works as promised, and I used it the

entire time. This is something I really like. They also have a 12c trigger, great for automated environments. What really separated these subs is the use of XLR, offering much better noise rejection over longer distances than single ended RCA. Since subs tend to have runs over 15 feet, XLR can really make a difference.

"The subs integrate very well into the entire Paradigm Reference Studio line … The same smooth, yet accurate sound … Did I mention that it has a real 1200 watt amp? Not a "maybe if struck by lightning" kind of amp, but a real work horse."

Phase Alignment, Cutoff Frequency, and Bass Contour (boost at 60 Hz) are also included. I would add that it would be nice to bypass the crossover entirely, such as the case with THX configurations.

FIT & FINISH

The look of the unit is svelte yet beefy. The flat sides and gloss top do well to hide the massive driver attached at the bottom. The two side passive radiators are also very prominent. Very much to my liking. The power indicator is a blue LED behind the Paradigm logo on the front.

How they managed to fit one 12" driver and two 10" drivers, along with a powerful amplifier, into this small 14" x 14" box astounds me.

THE SOUND

I hate to throw around some crazy adjectives, but these puppies rock. There was a clear brute force difference between the Seismics and my other subwoofers. In fact I really felt like one Seismic was a little stronger than the other pair. If you remember my other subwoofers were louder and almost as deep as the venerable Velodyne HGS-18. So putting the Seismic in comparison, it will knock your socks off.

They have a very clean authoritative sound, they never once shut off during my torture test. Where my other subwoofers bottomed out, the Seismics played through. I was skeptical, as I had heard a few "compact" and "loud" subs, and well they didn't sound very good. Paradigm has really hit the nail on the head, very compact, and yet sonically clean.

"This is the first sub that I have ever tested that didn't pop, hiss, overheat, or throw a tantrum during my testing."

As you can see from the in-room response plot (measurement includes the effects of the room, compared to an MLS response that filters out the effects of the room), the Seismic 12 has a very flat response. It's not as flat as my other subwoofer, but that one is a lot bigger, and is designed differently, giving slightly less volume but the flatter response. (If all subwoofers performed the same way, there would be a need for only one subwoofer manufacturer.) In listening, the Seismic sounded very well behaved, and provided robust reproduction. When commanded to overdrive itself, the unit refused, instead just playing at its max (a limiter kicks in to prevent clipping, and the lack of a limiter on the SVS is why they can bottom out).

Although the unit comes with a bass boost targeted at 60 Hz, I found that I liked it just fine without engaging this feature.

The subs integrate very well into the entire Studio line from Paradigm. They have the same smooth, yet accurate sound of the Studio Reference line. Did I mention that it has a real 1200 watt amp? Not a "maybe if struck by lightning" kind of amp, but a real work horse.

CONCLUSIONS

I have absolutely no complaints whatsoever about the Paradigm Seismic Subwoofer. This is one of the only subs that I have ever tested that didn't pop, hiss, overheat, or throw a tantrum during my testing. It has a nice clean sound that vies for King of the Hill. I bet my neighbors don't understand, but I'm sure you do.