"IMPRESSIVE POWER OUTPUT

… can handle the most dynamic low-frequency passages without exhibiting fatigue or drop-off."

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"… a great value for the higher-end user that is looking for a subwoofer that can really pump out clear and tight deep bass in any size room without spending a fortune."

PBK™ READY

Paradigm's Perfect Bass Kit digital room correction system (sold separately)

by Robert Silva

The Paradigm DSP-3400 Powered Subwoofer delivers powerful, clear, tight, and undistorted deep bass response from the combination of its large front facing 14-inch driver, dual front ports, and 300 watts of continuous power from its built-in amplifier. In addition, the DSP-3400 offers an array of controls that allow the user to tweak the performance parameters to specific room environments and listening tastes. To find out whether this subwoofer is right for your system, keep on reading …

SET-UP AND INSTALLATION

For this review, I opted for the common subwoofer pre-out connection available from several home theater receivers that is used in the majority of home theater setups. Also, I placed the subwoofer in the front of the room, just to the right of the front right channel speaker in each of the home theater systems used.

The DSP-3400 was tested in two rooms with the following dimensions: 20 ft x 15 ft, and 12 ft x 12 ft.

"… power, clarity, tightness, and undistorted deep bass response …"

The next step was to hear how the subwoofer sounded in its "straight-out-of-box" default settings. Although I was getting powerful and deep bass response, it was apparent that further adjustment was needed, as outlined in the subwoofer's User Manual.

The Paradigm DSP-3400 is a large, heavy, unit with a large 14-inch driver, complemented by dual front facing ports, and powerful built-in low frequency amplifier. The connections and controls are on the rear panel.

The DSP-3400 has several adjustments, including Phase (which matches the in/out subwoofer driver motion to the satellite speakers), Gain (volume level), and Crossover (sets the point at which you want the subwoofer to produce low frequency sounds, against the ability of the satellite speakers to reproduce low frequency sounds).

The controls allow matching to a variety of satellite speaker types. One downside: The controls are on the back of the subwoofer panel, and there is no remote control that allows adjustments to be made from your listening position.

PERFORMANCE

The DSP-3400 produced excellent deep, tight bass. Although it is very large, it was able to produce excellent bass even at low volume levels. The subwoofer proved to be a very good sonic match for the rest of the speakers. Blu-ray soundtracks with LFE effects, such as *Master and Commander*, *Alien vs Predator: Requiem, The Golden Compass*, and *Cloverfield*, and notable standard DVD soundtracks from *U571* and *The Lord of the Rings Trilogy* really showed off the power of the DSP-3400. On these tracks, the DSP-3400 showed no strain, fatigue, or drop-off at the lowest frequencies, producing LFE effects at full impact.

As a music subwoofer, the DSP-3400 reproduced clean bass response on several bass-notable cuts, such as the famous sliding bass riff on Heart's *Magic Man*, the Eric Kunzel/Telarc recording of the "1812 Overture", and Pink Floyd's SACD multi-channel mix on *Dark Side of the Moon*.

> "… excellent deep, tight bass — even at low volume levels … showed no strain, fatigue, or drop-off at the lowest frequencies, producing LFE effects at full impact."

One of the things that stood out for me was how forceful and clean, but not exaggerated, the bass response was even at low volume levels. This was especially brought out listening to Spyro Gyra's *Collection* CD at low volume while I was typing this review.

I found that, in terms of real world listening, that the DSP-3400 exhibited very little, if any, unnatural low frequency drop off at any volume level, and excellent recovery time between dynamic bass peaks.

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WHAT I LIKED ABOUT THE DSP-3400

There was a lot to like about the DSP-3400, including:

1. Excellent deep bass response – tight and clear.
2. Impressive power output. The DSP-3400 can handle the most dynamic low-frequency sound passages without exhibiting fatigue or drop-off.
3. Excellent low-frequency response at any volume level.
4. Front-firing sealed design. Dual front ports provided for bass extension.
5. Good price point for this class of subwoofer.

WHAT I DIDN'T LIKE ABOUT THE DSP-3400

1. No on-board provisions for connecting a second subwoofer.
2. No wireless remote control capability – this would make adjustment easier from the listening position.
3. To get the best tweaking result, you need two people to make the best adjustments; one at the sub and one at the listening position with a sound meter.
4. No way to save separate settings for Music and Movie use.
5. Very large and very heavy. Do not lift – use a hand truck or dolly.

FINAL TAKE

The DSP-3400 powered subwoofer delivers power, clarity, tightness, and undistorted deep bass response from the combination of its large front facing 14-inch driver, dual front ports, and 300 watts of continuous power from its built-in amplifier. In addition, it offers an array of controls on the rear panel that allow the user to tweak the performance parameters to specific room environments and listening tastes.

One misgiving I have on more expensive subwoofers, such as this one, is that it would be desirable to have remote control capability for the control settings. This would allow the listener to adjust the subwoofer from the actual listening position. In addition, it would be nice to be able to save separate settings for either movie or music listening use. This would give added flexibility.

Overall, I was impressed with the DSP-3400. It easily outperformed the comparison subs used in this review. Its bass response is excellent at both loud and soft volume levels, and is priced right. At its price, this definitely is not a subwoofer for the bargain hunter, but is a great value for the higher-end user that is looking for a subwoofer that can really pump out clear and tight deep bass in any size room without spending a fortune.

However, although this subwoofer sounds great in small, medium, and large sized rooms, it is physically very large, which will definitely dominate a small room environment. Also, if you need to move it around, use a hand truck or a dolly, as it weighs about 65 pounds. Taking all into consideration, I give the Paradigm DSP-3400 at rating of 4.5 out of 5 Stars.