

Relatively inconspicuous

As well as making real room-shakers, low-frequency specialist REL now offers a smart-looking 'lifestyle' option that has **Adam Rayner** wishing his room was more ABC1



HERE'S A DELICIOUSLY odd one – a subwoofer designed to be mounted on a wall. A 'lifestyle product', I would bet my life that REL's original designer Richard E Lord would never have designed this. However, it is with pleasure that I can suggest that, had he been asked to approve the performance of the Habitat 1, he would have done so, happily.

The idea of REL's new woofer, available in either black or white, is that it can be installed discreetly in any room (I used the optional floorstand rather than wall-mounting), offering a decent heft of bass without upsetting your interior designer. Aiding this is the fact that there's no need to run a signal wire around your room; the Habitat 1 is supplied with a wireless transmitter and sports a built-in wireless receiver, collectively known as the

company's own 'Longbow' system.

Wireless installation proves brilliant. REL suggests its subs should always be dual-connected via the supplied Speakon high-level plug (from your front speakers) as well as a single phono into the LFE input. Both the

subwoofer itself and the neat-looking transmitter unit have the same connection options. I hooked up the Habitat 1 both directly and wirelessly and found no disadvantage level-wise whatsoever by using the latter. As REL's Longbow system should present no tech challenge, even to the hard of thinking, there's no reason not to use it. Pairing occurs automatically.

Continuing the easy-to-use theme, the Habitat 1's manual is filled with illustrations of how to properly install it into your home, with tips on finding the best location acoustically given your room's constraints. The few controls (crossover, phase and volume) are easy to master and the manual guides novices through using them.

Wireless wizardry

The subwoofer may be small (just 635mm wide and 114mm deep), yet its two active 6.5in drivers, powered by a 150W amp, pack a ridiculous punch, given extra depth by the rear-firing passive radiating 10in cone. I dipped into *Harry Potter & The Deathly Hallows Pt 1*, which has a good amount of booms, bangs and crashes, and the REL easily added presence to my regular B&W floorstanders.

More than that, the large motor-grip-to-surface-area ratio of the two woofers ensures exceptional control. The bass is therefore amazingly taut, accurate and rich. Yes, you can find a limit if you set levels stupidly high but its performance is still worthy of its premium price tag, particularly when you factor in the wireless system.

Over the past few weeks the Habitat 1 has merged unobtrusively with my setup and been used with Freeview TV broadcasts as well as all manner of BDs from sci-fi flicks to family 'toons, and it has been tremendous throughout. It is beautifully constructed and will startle your guests, especially if you use petite satellite speakers all round. REL's technology is impressive and the output is, too ■

SPECIFICATIONS

- DRIVE UNITS:** 2 x 6.5in long-throw steel chassis drivers; 1 x 10in passive radiator
- ENCLOSURE:** Sealed, front- and rear-firing
- FREQUENCY RESPONSE:** 38Hz at -6dB
- ON-BOARD POWER:** 150W
- REMOTE CONTROL:** No, but uses proprietary Longbow™ wireless signal transmission system
- DIMENSIONS:** 635(w) x 406(h) x 114(d)mm
- WEIGHT:** 23kg
- CONNECTIONS:** 1 x phono input (low level); 1 x phono input (LFE); 1 x high-level Neutrik Speakon socket



HCC VERDICT

REL Habitat 1

→ £1,300 Approx → www.rel.net
→ Tel: 01656 768 777

HIGHS: Beautiful, compact design; superb wireless connection; fine performance
LOWS: You can find the limit of the 6.5in cones if you overdrive them; wireless system contributes to price tag

Performance ★★★★★

Design ★★★★★

Features ★★★★★

Overall ★★★★★

AV INFO

PRODUCT: Wall-mountable wireless subwoofer

POSITION: Sits next to the more traditional T, R and Gibraltar subs in REL's lineup

PEERS: Q Acoustics 7070si; KEF R400B