

Barking mad

This well-designed smallscale subwoofer startles bass fiend **Adam Rayner** with its ability to track low-end effects without ever losing control



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JL AUDIO STRADDLES

both the AV and car audio markets, delivering deep bass thrills to those who seek them. On the home cinema side it is best known for its premium-priced, insanely potent Gotham and Fathom subwoofers. This offering, new to the UK and debuted at the Bristol Show, is the company's idea of an entry-level product, and is called Dominion.

The £900 d108 is a sealed box of just 1.3 litres. It uses a single 8in woofer and a 500W RMS amplifier. The slightly bigger Dominion, the d110, has a 10in driver and a more punchy 750W power plant, and costs £200 more.

As well as high-level speaker wire connections via a neat quick-release plug system, the Dominion d108 has twin phono sockets and can

be fed in LFE or stereo. There's also an Ethernet socket, used for connection of the receiver box of JL Audio's new JLink system.

This £235 accessory comes with a 2.4GHz wireless transmitter that hooks into your source gear. Up to three extra receivers can be used (£135

A black ash finish is also an option, and lowers the price to £820

each), to feed more subwoofers.

I connected the transmitter/receiver system and after a little time setting up the woofer, played some music before spinning *Inside Out* by Pixar. The back panel of the sub is interesting: there's a polarity flip switch (and an input ground lift switch, incidentally, to avoid any earth buzzes) but there's also

a continuous-sweep phase control, zero to 280 degrees. You can take this as an indicator of JL Audio's affinity with bass.

The 8in driver has a very big top roll surround, with a bigger roll-diameter than found on most 15in drivers. Inside, a bevy of patented parts reside to allow a stupefyingly long throw – up to 2.5in, suggests JL Audio. Along with the iron grip of an amp with a closely regulated power supply, it makes for bizarrely impactful bass from a small woofer.

Luscious LFE

The d108 purred, growled and held luscious notes underneath my resident system of large B&W tower speakers and a centre speaker weighing thrice what this woofer does.

The Pixar 'toon starts very gently inside a newborn's head. We're given exposition about how memories are kept. And when a memory is stored, this plot-vital concept is accompanied by a rich, heavy, bass throb. Just so you don't miss it. And it was here that I realised JL Audio's tiny box has an identity crisis. It's like a Chihuahua that barks like a Great Dane. The d108 captured the depth and absurd weight of the effect, its relatively small driver aided by that massive excursion and firm suspension. Set deep into the front baffle behind a grille intended to be left in place, it shifts air with relish.

Without spoilers: Sadness and Joy accidentally get sucked up a big pipe. Another

SPECIFICATIONS

DRIVER: 1 x 8in long-excursion woofer

ENCLOSURE: Sealed

FREQUENCY RESPONSE: 31Hz-112Hz (+/-1.5dB); -3dB at 29Hz and 119Hz

ONBOARD POWER: 500W RMS Class D amp

REMOTE CONTROL: No

DIMENSIONS: 254(w) x 289(h) x 336(d)mm (including feet and rear fins)

WEIGHT: 12kg

CONNECTIONS: High-level speaker inputs (stereo or mono); phono inputs (stereo or mono); Wireless Link Port for use with optional JLink TRX system (rated at up to 30m)



important soundtrack moment with a large, taut 'thwobb' effect that drops deep. The d108 simply delivered all this, with no evidence of its small size, and without a shrug. Even when our protagonist gets in trouble, *Islands Of Personality* crashing into the abyss, the room-shaking tones got played with clean, full-bodied aplomb.

Furthermore, *Jangles the clown*, asleep and snoring behind the doors of subconscious, presents a brooding LFE effect that goes almost to subsonics. This proved a test of the d108's bass extension. It's rated at 29Hz at -3dB, but JL Audio also claims a 21Hz response at -10dB, which is entirely believable. And higher up the frequency band, this woofer relished the rambling basslines of the jazzy end credits music.

So in addition to its pretty looks and capable controls, the Dominion d108 sub is astonishingly good in output. Played unseen, I might have thought it was subwoofer with a 12in driver and a solid amp.

It's certainly not cheap, but is very good indeed. Perfect for when space is tight ■

HCC VERDICT



JL Audio Dominion d108

→ £900 → www.av-techsolutions.co.uk

WE SAY: Significantly more money than some 8in subwoofers around, but the Dominion offers an output that belies its size, with superb control