



Review: REL T/9x Subwoofer A New Standard



REL, often gets tagged on social media and mentioned in other platforms for their massive six-pack arrays, which are unquestionably awesome.

However, just as some Porsche or Range Rover, potential uniformed buyers can be frightened by what these premium models cost, not realizing that their engineering expertise goes all the way back to their entry and slightly above entry models as well. You don't have to go into hock to get great subwoofer performance from REL.

I'm happy to say I use a six-pack of their top, no.25 subs in my main system, yet to put things in perspective, I use their \$449 TZero III sub in my desktop system and a six-pack of the 510s in my living room. What this has given me is an opportunity to experience most of the lineup and see just how much quality and performance has been brought to bear on their T/x series. A while back, we did a comparison review of the entire T/x series, the T/5x, T/7x, and T/9x.

This is a more in-depth review of the T9/x, which is the top of this series. Not everyone has the room, the budget, or the system to support \$50k worth of subwoofers, but a hifi system is just that, a system, and it's important to keep a handle on trying to achieve synergy between the components to achieve the maximum result within what you have to work with.

Much has been said about this elusive concept of synergy, about magical systems that deliver well beyond what one might expect for the amount of cash spent. Consider each building block of an audio system in terms of just how much music said component can reveal. Often, we see proud pictures of systems on Facebook and Instagram featuring a “jewel” component, that is well beyond the capability of the rest of the components featured. More often than not, the owner has found an incredible deal on a used piece, or a demo piece priced so much lower than they expected, so it makes perfect sense.



Machine like

I'm often asked why I compare audio systems to automobiles, and the main reason is because the most successful automobiles, if you truly enjoy the tactile pleasure of driving, are not necessarily the fastest ones, but the ones that provide the best balance. The number of people that have called the first-generation Mazda Miata a “chick car” are often flabbergasted by how fast that little car can hustle down a twisty country road, providing an engaging driving experience that many, much more expensive cars cannot.

The same thing goes for a great hifi system, no matter what the cost. If you can choose components that will work in concert with your room, and the other components, it's possible to achieve results you may never have dreamed possible on even a limited budget. Another big part of this equation is the ability to set your system up to the absolute limit of its ability, but that's another article.

Enter the T/9x

Another point that needs to be underscored with REL, (and another reason for the comparison between hifi and autos) is their approach of bringing flagship technology to the rest of the lineup. What they learn in their top models, always finds a way, albeit abbreviated to their entry level models.



Successful experiments in materials, topology, and cabinet construction are all in full effect here. One of the first things you might notice about the current range is the rounded cabinet corners. Harder to make, but better for acoustics. Refinements to their 300-Watt A/B amplifier and filter network all contribute to the sonics provide by the 10-inch FibreAlloy™ woofer, and 10-inch, downward facing passive.

As with REL's other subwoofer families, there is an underlying design brief, with each model in the range going deeper with more LF extension than the model before. Where the T5/x is more of a fit for a room with a smaller volume, the T/9x moves more air, suited to a bigger room, and a main speaker that can dig a little deeper.

Setup and such

We agree with REL that if you can, consider a pair of subwoofers rather than a single, because it makes it easier to optimize the bass response in your room. Of course, if you have to start with one, by all means. While you will get more ultimate output with a pair, the major gain with two comes with the way they couple to your main speakers, providing a more effortless, more transparent blend.

Starting with our pair of Eggleston Nicos (\$5,495/pair, review [HERE](#)) and the Luxman L-550AXII (\$5,995, review [HERE](#)), a solitary T/9x makes an excellent match in our 13 x 15-foot room. REL's comprehensive setup guide suggests corner placement, yet in this particular room, a single subwoofer works well slightly off center. Setting up in this configuration will require slightly different settings because the room gain achieved from corner placement is diminished in the middle of the room.

Moving out to the 13 x 18-foot living room (which opens into the rest of the house) makes for a perfect dual woofer setup. As the Nicos go down fairly low, setting the T9/x crossover down fairly low works



perfectly. If you are new to the REL way of doing things, they use a high-level connection, from your speaker outputs. This lets the subwoofer follow the same signal that is going to your speakers in terms of sound character, but more importantly, makes it much easier to get a seamless blend with your main speakers.

Letting the main speakers run full range, and letting their low frequency output roll off naturally makes for subwoofers that will blend perfectly with your mains, and providing more sonic

cohesion – provided you take the care to set them up correctly. And blend seamlessly they did. In the slightly bigger room, the extra T/9x adds more upper bass and lower midrange body to the Nico's presentation. The extra grunt provided on bass-heavy tracks is equally enjoyed, but again, the presence provided by these subwoofers is unmistakably good.

As with every REL-based system I've set up over the years, when properly set up the RELs are undetectable, until you turn them off. In addition to the lowest bass fundamentals diminishing, the front to back imaging component of the system nearly disappears. Even when listening to music that doesn't have a ton of heavy bass. The level of depth that the REL subwoofers provide never ceases to amaze me.

In case you are wondering, the T/9x tips the scale at a mere 45.5 pounds (20.6kg), so these are subs you can move by yourself. They are available in high gloss black and high gloss white. That's no marketing speak – when REL says "high gloss," they mean it. There isn't a new automobile on the market at any price that has as deep a finish as what comes standard on a REL. Cabinet size is a compact 14.5" wide, 13.4" high, and 15.5" deep. You should be able to install them nearly anywhere without issue.

That the T/9x can take advantage of REL's Arrow wireless system, makes system integration and installation even easier. \$199 gets you a transmitter and receiver, allowing you to place your T/9x's up to 50 feet away. Setup is painless and takes less than 90 seconds to implement. We did not use the Arrow system in the context of this review, but past experience with REL wireless options on other subwoofers is fantastic.

Further listening

Tracking through the title of Carole King's classic, Tapestry – an album not known for its LF content, reveals much more body and saturation in her voice and piano with the RELs active. Moving on to Duran Duran's latest record, Future Past begins with some amazing bass grooves, right from the start. Those loving bass will really enjoy this, because that's what you add subwoofers for, right? To feel that bass.

Mating the T9/x's up with a few different speakers delivers equally good results. In addition to their power and extension, these subs are fast, dynamic, and articulate. Swapping the Eggleston out for a pair of Magnepans and some vintage Acoustat ESLs, prove they can keep up with the pace of the delicate ESL panels. I wish I would have had a pair of these 30 years ago, when my main system used Acoustat 1+1s! The Luxman amp has two pairs of speaker outputs, making it incredibly easy to hear the difference between subs in and out of the system. There's no turning back.

Final thoughts

As mentioned, each of the three models in the /x series provide a similar voice and level of resolution. The one (or pair) you choose will depend heavily on how low your main speakers can extend, the volume of your listening room, and ultimately how loud you play music.

Moving up to the Serie S subs brings more refinement in every aspect, though at a higher cost. If you are looking for a high performance, yet compact and cost-effective way to add low frequency extension, the REL T/9x is fantastic. The T/x subwoofers are meant to be used as single subwoofers or in pairs, they can't be expanded to six-pack array service. This may be your ultimate decision when trying to decide between a pair of T/9x's and a single S510. If you want bang for the buck, and a minimal box compliment, the T/9x will serve you well. Higher audiophile ambitions? Maybe the S/510. Or, just put the T/9xs in another system. I can spend your money all day.



Either way, the REL T/9x is highly recommended and worthy of one of our Exceptional Value Awards for 2021.