



# Adventures in bassy-hitting

Steve Withers discovers if SVS's new high-excursion 13in driver really is 'an iron fist inside a velvet glove' – and if the SB-3000 is worth the £1,275 ticket

## AV INFO

**PRODUCT:** Front-firing sealed subwoofer with 13in driver

**POSITION:** SVS's mid-range subwoofer series, also available in a ported design

**PEERS:** REL HT/1508; GoldenEar SuperSub X

**WHEN IT COMES** to subwoofers there's a small number of manufacturers that immediately springs to mind, and SVS is one of them. This American company has been mining the low-frequency depths for years, and producing some of the best subs ever made along the way.

You might think a company in this position would be inclined to sit back on its subsonic laurels for a while and let its products bed in, but SVS is currently in innovation mode, delivering new models year after year. The most recent, the SB-3000, combines innovations from the flagship 16-Ultra range with a new 13in high-excursion driver.

SVS is clearly pleased with the latest addition to its lineup, promising a performance akin to 'an iron fist in a velvet glove': a bold if slightly uncomfortable sounding claim. The driver, as discussed by SVS President Gary Yacoubian elsewhere in this issue, is an entirely new design that features a serious dual-ferrite magnet motor assembly

weighing over 11kg, combined with an aluminium vented cone and an injection-moulded surround to ensure greater excursion. Its ability to move copious air is backed up by a Sledge STA-800D2 amplifier, which delivers a claimed 800W RMS and peaks of 2,500W.

## Sealed with a kick

Considering the size of the driver this sub is surprisingly small, but the design doesn't really deviate from the traditional cube with rubber feet. The SB-3000 uses a compact sealed cabinet, with a thick MDF front baffle and rigid bracing to support the extreme horsepower under the hood, aiming for an acoustically inert performance.

You get a choice of ash black (£1,275) or piano gloss black (£1,350) finishes, and there's a non-resonant steel mesh grille that's thankfully removable. It might provide protection but personally I think it's an eye-sore: give me

a traditional fabric grille any day. However, I'm glad to see SVS has ditched the irritating blue light previously found on the front of its woofer.

There are minimal connections on the SB-3000, with just a stereo phono input (one of which doubles as an LFE input), and a stereo phono output. There's also a 12V trigger

**'Deep, thunderous low-end combined with nimbleness and tonal accuracy – the SB-3000 is sure to please'**

and a USB port, the latter handling firmware updates or powering SVS's optional SoundPath wireless adapter.

The rear panel also has an Intelligent Control Interface (ICI), which is a fancy name for a bunch of touch buttons and an LED display. It allows you to adjust the volume, crossover and phase, but frankly it makes more sense to do all the adjustments using the SVS smartphone app.

This feature, first introduced on the 16-Ultra range, uses Bluetooth and makes setting up and controlling the SB-3000 an absolute breeze. You can set the usual gubbins like volume, crossover and phase, but the app offers much more than that. You can change the polarity if necessary, compensate for room gain, and choose between two presets optimised for movies or music. The more confident among you can also use the three-band parametric EQ to calibrate the in-room performance of the SB-3000.

It's a tweaker's dream. Adjustments can be done sitting at the sweet spot and – thanks to Bluetooth – even when the sub is out of sight. I'd recommend a basic setup on the SB-3000 and leave your AV receiver to handle any equalisation, but it's great to have options.

## Extreme energy

This high-tech wizardry is all well and good, but it's meaningless if the SB-3000 doesn't deliver subsonic thrills. Thankfully it does, filling my home cinema with extreme amounts of low-frequency energy.

I kicked things off with my usual test: the bass notes at the start *Edge of Tomorrow* (Blu-ray). The SVS doesn't break a sweat, energising the room with a sense of scale that is frankly unnerving, which was undoubtedly the filmmaker's intention.

Having established that the SB-3000 isn't messing around, it was time to see if it could deliver all that bass in a controlled manner. SVS subs have in the past been rather unruly, delivering low-end slam that, while enjoyable, could also be overpowering. More recent models have shown a degree of restraint, and this latest addition is no exception.

The Atmos soundtrack on the 4K disc of *Aquaman* has a colossal amount of bass, with even the slightest effect feeling like someone has just dropped an anvil. The chase across Sicilian rooftops is a great example, with every blast from Black Manta hitting with the kind of dynamic slam that will have you diving for cover. And there was a scale to the bass here that was particularly noticeable. The SB-3000 is capable of reproducing subsonic frequencies in a powerful and sustained manner that more affordable models will struggle to achieve. That's what you're paying for: a sense of authority and composure to accompany sheer power.

Yet the SB-3000 doesn't deliver these punishing levels of low-frequency energy with wild abandon; it manages to

## SPECIFICATIONS

**DRIVE UNITS:** 1 x 13in high-excursion driver **ENCLOSURE:** Sealed, front-firing **FREQUENCY RESPONSE (CLAIMED):** 18Hz-270Hz **ONBOARD POWER (CLAIMED):** 800W Sledge DSP amplifier **REMOTE CONTROL:** No. SVS app control instead **DIMENSIONS:** 397(h) x 385(w) x 451(d)mm **WEIGHT:** 24.7kg

**FEATURES:** Stereo phono input/LFE input; stereo phono output; Bluetooth remote app; volume; low pass filter; phase; polarity; parametric EQ; room gain compensation; custom presets; USB ports for wireless unit; 12V trigger

## PARTNER WITH



**AQUAMAN:** DC's latest comic adaptation is fast and fun, and features an Atmos soundtrack that makes rival flicks look like mere mortals. Bass is a key attribute, making it the perfect partner for SVS's new woofer. See p92 for more.

2



1. The SB-3000 brings SVS's Bluetooth control/EQ app to a new price point

2. The steel mesh grille can be removed if you want the 13in driver on show

retain the accuracy and control that differentiates a good sub from a great one. There's a speed to the piston motion that allows transients to stop and start on a dime, ensuring that bass underscores the action, rather than dominates it. Some might miss the unbridled oomph of previous SVS subs, but these new and more refined models offer greater flexibility with both movies and music.

This is well demonstrated during the scene after Bradley Cooper's character has disgraced himself at the Grammys in *A Star is Born* (UHD BD). As he's bundled into a shower there's a drum solo on the soundtrack that the SB-3000 delivers with a sonic attack that skilfully emphasises his drunken disorientation. And drums during the various performances in *A Star is Born* have a musicality that drives the songs and gives the concert footage added presence. This responsiveness and pin-point control is typical of a sealed unit, but the SB-3000 digs deep as well, producing pulse-racing but distortion-free LF.

SVS has achieved its goal of delivering chest-thumping output and percussive bass extension, while retaining refinement and musicality – and done so from a small footprint and at a relatively affordable price. If you like deep and thunderous low-end combined with nimbleness and tonal accuracy, then the SB-3000 is sure to please ■

## HCC VERDICT



SVS SB-3000

→ £1,275 → [www.svsound.com](http://www.svsound.com)

**WE SAY:** The new 13in high-excursion driver delivers serious low-end slam with surprising finesse, while the clever remote app makes setup and tweaking a doddle.