

You don't need bulk to be a **subwoofer** – all four of these pint-size products make a racket in the right system, but only the best have the finesse to make movies and music magic

# Test Express

SUBWOOFERS £200 – £500

## Small boxes big up your bass

### MJ Acoustics Pro 50 Mk2



£300

**IT'S FIVE YEARS** since MJ Acoustics made its debut, and to celebrate its birthday, the company has launched a Mk2 version of its original product. The same small box packs a 25cm downward-firing driver and a 120w amp (the original used a 20cm unit and a 50w amp).

Also added to the mix are twin crossovers, so far only found in pricier MJ subs. These allow you to use your one sub to do two jobs. Connected to the front speakers of your AV amp, you can use it to augment the bass while listening to music – especially useful if you have small front speakers. Second, you can simultaneously have the sub connected to your AV amp's subwoofer line output, so movie soundtracks are played with their dedicated '.1' channel in full flow. And the unit is clever enough to do both at the same time.

#### FOR

Compact size, great with music and movies, versatile set-up

#### AGAINST

Not a lot

#### VERDICT

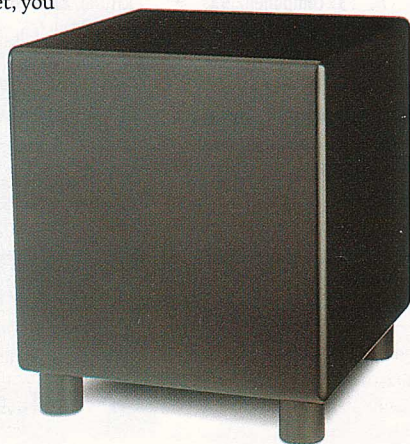
MJ's Mk2 helps the Pro 50 not only keep pace with its rivals, but to surpass them

#### Latest version is right on the mark

This is a superbly tight and punchy little unit with music or movies, ideal for use with modest front speakers, but still able to add something even when used with well-extended floorstanders.

During The Who's *Live 8* set, you feel the explosive power of Damon Minchella's bass and Steve White's drumming, it also crashes out those big *War of the Worlds* thumps and rumbles with serious conviction. With its compact dimensions and the affordable price, and the Pro 50 Mk2 is a real gem.

Looks aren't high on the MJ's agenda, but at least it's tiny enough to hide somewhere



### Mordaunt Short MS309i



£230

**ANOTHER IMPROVED VERSION**, this time it's the five-star MS309. The MS309i has a new surround for its 26cm neatly engineered aluminium bass driver – it varies in thickness to smooth out the movement – and also has a revised port design on the twin rear-facing vents.

There's a 175w digital amp and, in addition to the usual gain and crossover controls, a variable notch filter to counteract any bass 'humps' caused by room interactions – using the test CD and a sound pressure meter, you can find any bass boom and dial it out using the frequency and cut controls. There are switches to bypass this and set phase, plus an auto-sensing power selector, but no high-level inputs. This isn't a problem if you're using the sub with an AV receiver, but means you can't connect the sub to a stereo amp with normal speakers.

#### FOR

Resounding thump and bump abilities with movies

#### AGAINST

Not as adept with music; no high level inputs for connecting to a stereo amp

#### VERDICT

Superbly priced compact sub suitable for kicking your movie soundtracks up the backside

#### Mordaunt Short is a monster with movies

The MS309i provides a whopping bang for a small box. The flipside is that it's not always the most agile or weighty sub – despite that hi-tech driver, it can sound a shade slow and ploddy at times with crisply recorded music. Where it comes into its own is its ability to hit hard with explosive movie moments: *War of the Worlds* is delivered with satisfying force, cleanly enough to make you jump. At this price, this compact sub makes an excellent base for a budget movie system.

While the '309i lacks some subtlety with music, it makes up for it with movie mayhem

