



RATING

SVS SB-3000
Subwoofer

PERFORMANCE



FEATURES



BUILD QUALITY



VALUE



Bass Evolution

By David Vaughn



OVER THE PAST 15 years I've reviewed more A/V products than I can count, but the ones I most look forward to watching the FedEx guy hoist off the delivery truck are subwoofers. That's mainly because I love hearing bass—the more bass the better. Also, the reviewing process gives me an opportunity to revisit some of my favorite movie

bass torture-test scenes to see if the latest, greatest subwoofer to come my way is up to snuff.

Based in Youngstown, Ohio, SVS has been manufacturing subwoofers since the late 1990s. They started out as a little internet-direct company that sold their wares via online enthusiast forums but have since grown into a global

powerhouse with dealer partners all over the world. I've owned many SVS subs over the years and have recommended them countless times to friends and family. In fact, I still use a 15-year-old SVS PC-Ultra in my reference system. (Sure, the upgrade bug has tried to bite me many times over the years, but my wife continues to exercise her veto power as the household CFO.)

Like other companies, speaker makers must regularly innovate and release new products or the competition will pass them by. SVS certainly isn't one to rest on its laurels. I've had at least one new SVS sub find its way to my home theater each year for the past few years, and 2019 is no different.

The company's latest 3000 Series offering consists a pair of subs—one ported (PB-3000) and the other sealed (SB-3000)—in relatively modest-size enclosures. Unfortunately, I had to choose just one, so I went with the SB-3000 for a few reasons. First, I'm aware from previous experience that SVS already knows how to make a reference ported sub and didn't want to give them a layup. Second, the company's marketing states that the SB-3000's reference-level performance "has never been available at this price from a cabinet of this size." A bold claim, but can they back it up? Read on and see....

Most of the SB-3000's features, including PEQ, can be controlled via the SVS 3000 Series app.

IN THE BEGINNING

The genesis of the 3000 Series extends back a few years to the introduction of the company's 16-Ultra Series, where SVS brought ultra-premium performance to

the under-\$2,500 subwoofer category and earned a *Sound & Vision* Top Pick in the process. Next came the 4000 series, which featured slightly smaller woofers (13.5-inch versus 16-inch) and smaller enclosures at a correspondingly lower price. While this move provided customers with more choices, \$1,500 remains a lot of coin for most. Could the engineers at SVS push the subwoofer price/performance envelope even further?

As it turns out, yes, they could, and with the SB-3000 they have. The new SVS sub is on the dainty side as far as high-performance models go, measuring 15.2 x 15 x 17.8 inches (WxHxD) and weighing a comparatively back-friendly 54.5 pounds. The SB-3000 is available in two finishes: Black Ash or Piano Gloss Black (reviewed here) with a rigid metal grille to protect the front-firing woofer. Generally speaking, as a subwoofer's cabinet and woofer get smaller, output below 25Hz is reduced, but the engineers at SVS have somehow found a way to coax sub-20Hz extension from this little beast along with surprisingly strong output.

The custom-designed 13-inch high-excursion driver that the SB-3000 uses is possibly the company's best one yet. A new split-coil design seems to be the secret ingredient that delivers the big breakthrough in performance. When playing at moderate levels, only the middle part of the coil is used. Then, as the volume gets louder and the increased demand for low-frequency extension kicks in, the coil expands, allowing you to hear—and feel—the power of the music or soundtrack. The SB-3000 features a Sledge 800-watt continuous class-D amplifier with over 2,500 watts of peak power. Hookup options include line-level inputs/outputs, a 12-volt trigger input, and a port for an SVS Wireless Adapter (sold separately for \$120). There's also a detachable



grounded power cord.

SETUP AND USE

The SB-3000's rear panel contains digital controls to adjust the low-pass filter setting, phase, and volume, but I wouldn't even bother bending down to make those adjustments manually. Instead, I'd recommend downloading SVS's excellent 3000 Series subwoofer app, which uses your phone's Bluetooth connection to control the subwoofer.

The 3000 Series app lets you adjust volume and set the low-pass filter, phase, polarity, and room gain compensation (a much-needed feature for rooms where the lowest frequencies get exaggerated). It also includes a parametric EQ (PEQ) with adjustments to set desired filter frequency (20-200Hz), increase or decrease the SPL (dB) of the filter band, and adjust filter bandwidth (Q factor) to tailor the sub's output to fit your room. There are also three user presets (Movie, Music, and Custom) to save settings for various listening scenarios that can be changed on the fly from within the app.

My reference system includes four subwoofers that I've calibrated using a miniDSP digital room correction processor along with the Room EQ freeware software. For this review, however, I bypassed the

miniDSP and connected the SB-3000 directly to my Anthem AVM-60 preamp/processor, placing it at the mid-point of my right sidewall—one of the better sub placement spots I've measured in my room.

One benefit of the SB-3000's smaller enclosure compared with some of the company's other models is that it can fit almost anywhere in a room and blend in with the environment. To that end, my wife commented on how "pretty" the sub was, and wondered why all of our other subs couldn't be this small? (I smiled and pretended that I didn't hear her.) To put the SB-3000's size in perspective, its cabinet dimensions are 39 percent smaller than the company's SB-4000 model, and a whopping 53 percent smaller than its SB-16-Ultra.

Once installed, I calibrated the SB-3000's output using an

At a Glance

- + Outstanding performance for price
- + Excellent control app
- + Compact form factor
- Lacks auto-calibration/room EQ

Price: \$1,099 (piano gloss black), \$999 (black ash)

(877) 626-5623

svsound.com

SPL meter and lived with it in my system for about a week without doing any tweaking aside from running the volume around 3dB hot—my usual practice. Having lived with multiple subwoofers for years, I expected I would miss my regular setup, but I was surprised to find that unless I was standing up and moving around the room, that didn't prove to be the case with the SB-3000. Seated at my main listening position, everything sounded fantastic when watching TV programs and the occasional movie.

EQ ISN'T HARD TO DO

Since the SB-3000 doesn't provide any onboard auto-EQ, I broke out my UMIK-1 Omnidirectional USB microphone and RoomEQ Wizard during the second week of my evaluation. My idea was to use objective





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test report

SVS SB-3000 SUBWOOFER

measurements to see how well the sub integrated with the room, and to attempt to fine-tune performance using its built-in PEQ feature. As expected, I measured a slight dip between 35 Hz and 38 Hz—something I was able to correct in less than five minutes using PEQ plus the 3000 Series app. All changes made in the app were recognized instantly, which made tweaking the sub's output an extremely simple process.

Looking at my measurements, what most shocked me was the sub's output from 16 Hz to 20 Hz. One would expect that range to be anemic in a subwoofer of this size, but that wasn't the case at all with the SB-3000. The readings certainly matched what I was feeling when watching movies on Ultra HD Blu-ray such as *Pacific Rim* and *Hacksaw Ridge*, both of which have a reference-quality Dolby Atmos soundtrack with copious amounts of LFE. The Jaeger footfalls on *Pacific Rim* could be felt as well as heard, my subfloor resonating with each step from the giant robots.

Jumping to *Hacksaw Ridge*, I could also feel the impact that the 16-inch guns made when softening up the enemy before our boys stormed the battlefield. There was nothing anemic at all about the SB-3000's performance, which was characterized by extreme low-frequency extension, massive output, and precision on transients. At one point I had to check my wiring to make sure I had disconnected my other four subwoofers—it was that impressive!

To prepare for Season 8 of *Game of Thrones*, I binge-watched Season 7 on Blu-ray to acquaint myself with the land of Westeros. The Atmos soundtrack on these discs is fantastic and I love Ramin Djawadi's music score with its ample use of cellos. The SB-3000 blended perfectly with my M&K Sound S-150 speaker system: When Daenerys Targaryen led her dragons into battle in the final episode, I could feel every stroke of their wings, along with the impact of their fiery breath as they torched the poor souls on the ground.

The SB-3000 continued to impress when I switched to playing music. Being a sealed design, I expected the sub's performance to be well-suited for hi-fi use, and it turned out to be exactly that. Regina Spektor's song "Fidelity" has a kick-ass bassline that's hard-hitting and clean. With a lesser subwoofer, the notes might overhang and muddy up the sound. But even at reference levels, the SB-3000 didn't break a sweat—each bass note hit with power, precision, and speed.

Specs

13 in high-excursion driver in sealed enclosure

AMPLIFIER: 800 watts RMS (2,500

watts peak)

CONNECTIONS: line-level stereo in, high-pass out; trigger input, port for optional wireless adapter

DIMENSIONS: (WxHxD, inches): 15.2 x 15 x 17.8

WEIGHT: (pounds): 54.5



CONCLUSION

When the SVS SB-3000 arrived, I first thought it would be a mismatch with my 5,000 cubic-foot home theater and I would be forced to evaluate it in my much smaller secondary system. Frankly, I couldn't have been more wrong. I was completely blown away by my experience with the SB-3000, which to me confirmed the company's claim that this is the best-performing subwoofer of its size.

At \$999 for the black ash finish (and \$1,099 for piano gloss black), the SB-3000 has no equal at its price. Add in the company's excellent configuration and control app and you have an absolute steal, regardless of the finish that you choose. At this price, in fact, I'd recommend you buy two of them. You will have zero regrets whatsoever.

The Verdict

SVS continues its tradition of providing more than ample bass for your buck, this time in a relatively compact subwoofer accompanied by a useful setup and control app.