

The God of Thunder

When they think of a top system, most people focus on the bass. People like bass. We all know the comforting, massaging gut feeling at live concerts. To be able to experience something like this at home is one of the dreams of every high-end, even if very few get anywhere near such an experience. STEREO does, because JL Audio's Gotham V2 is here!

Tom Frantzen



Entrance of the earthquake generator: 163 kilograms of live weight, 4,500 watts of amplifier power - that's 6.12 HP - two 34.5-centimeter bass drivers arranged on top of one another with a fist-thick surround in an elegant, rounded fiberglass housing without parallel walls, 18-band EQ -Room measurement by microphone - this is the Gotham V2, the flagship of the subwoofer specialist JL Audio. Delivered on a pallet, it forms the vanguard of distinguished visitors from Florida. Because Doug Henderson, Senior Vice President and Silvio Pupino, Export Sales Director of the company, have a mission. They are in Germany to make the subwoofer more popular. The most powerful model the audiophile subwoofer world currently has to offer is just the thing as an ambassador.

In this country, this type of device is still often dismissed as a "bass cube" that just "makes a little more bass", especially when the speakers are unable to deliver it themselves. But that is, to put it mildly, a very narrow and simple description of what a subwoofer should do - a good one anyway, because there are of course plenty of plain wooden boxes with woofers, which more-or-less always boom the same low tone.

But this is something completely different. Rather, the approach is to

fundamentally improve the existing loudspeaker, this applies even to the highest quality speakers – with the “best subwoofers in the world”. There is no serious doubt that the „Gotham V2“ could be that. The bass drivers, which are extremely powerful with ten (!) centimeters excursion, reach inside to the rear walls, and they weigh several times as much as the sometimes-impressive woofers of all the other speakers in the room. It's not a fair fight.

Ultimate Bass

In addition to the sheer impressive specs and the highest quality, yet brute exterior, the giant includes extensive digital electronics including „room EQ“ to literally handle every loudspeaker pairing. In our STEREO listening room this is currently one – of course it is two – full-blown B&W 800 D3 to be upgraded by the Gotham. With four men, we moved the JL Audio Gotham V2 to the vacated space next to them, where the Gotham is in line with the main loudspeakers. This position is favorable for the phase behavior. With its very similar rounding in the high gloss piano lacquer housing, it looks very good with the B&W speakers. Nevertheless, the stately B&W suddenly looks almost tiny. Now the Gotham can accompany the British speakers on the lower octaves. After we have roughly determined the phase, a not too high crossover frequency and the proper level, it sounds really excellent. Suddenly lower limit



Doug Henderson (r.), senior vice president of JL Audio, and Silvio Pupino, export sales director, visited our STEREO office.

frequencies of below 20 Hertz are easily even possible. It's impressive how the ground shakes.

But after the calibration it is actually even better. Then we put the optional JL Audio CR-1 crossover in place. Even the excellent B&W 800 is more convincing if you relieve it of the flexing and heavy lifting work of the lower octave or even the two lower octaves. The B&W drivers can play more precisely and with less stress. This is what the active crossover CR-1 from JL Audio can do, which in the hands of professionals offers a playground of settings with which the transitions between main loudspeaker and subwoofer can be finely balanced and

INFORMATION

JL Audio Gotham V2

Price: €18,000
(optional active
crossover
CR-1 €5,000)
Dimensions:
54,6x86,7x61 cm
Warranty: 3 Years



Doug Henderson adjusted the combination of JL Audio Gotham V2 and CR-1 with microphone, notebook and measuring program „TüN“ live.

fine-tuned as if the team was made up of sub and „satellites“ – a belittling expression when referring to the B&W – made for one another from the start.

The Ideal Solution for Division of Labor

It goes without saying that one may be surprised that an „uber“ subwoofer for 18,000 euros still requires a crossover for around another 5000 euros. I also had these doubts myself. But only with the CR-1 is it possible to decouple the B&W from the fantastic Accoustic Arts power amp at around 80 Hertz and to have the Gotham support it with 12db or 24db slopes as required.

You can hear that very clearly, as well as the adjustment of the quality (Q factor), i.e. the level drop in the „crossover“ area. The fully analogue CR-1 goes way beyond the already abundant possibilities of the Gotham alone. You can also use it to adjust the balance between the sub and loudspeakers after set-up, even for individual tracks or for two-channel and home theater use. Additionally, a very precise measurement is possible using a notebook PC, measuring microphone and the JL Audio TuN software, which can be downloaded for free from the JL Audio homepage. You can even see what the settings are doing „live“.

This subwoofer can improve EVERY loudspeaker. The room becomes bigger, the playback effortless.



Audiophile pressure: What the optimally calibrated Gotham V2 delivers in terms of consistent low bass is out of this world.

To be clear, the JL Audio crossover is not, of course, absolutely necessary to achieve a very good result. But if, for example, a second subwoofer comes into play, or if you have to deal with stubborn room modes that are difficult to get to grips with, or if you simply want the ultimate perfection, then additional measurements and

WORLD POWER BASS

JL Audio was founded in 1975 by James Birch and Lucio Proni. Both are still active today, Proni as a CEO and chief designer. JL Audio employs 600 people in the USA alone at locations in Florida, Arizona and Oregon. Their products are exported literally all over the world. JL Audio operates in the fields of car audio, home audio with home cinema, custom installation and hi-fi as well as marine and power sports, whereby the car hi-fi sector is traditionally the strongest, but home audio, in particular, is currently experiencing extreme growth.

Germany is seen as a complicated, demanding key market with a signal effect for all of Europe.

JL Audio is also very involved in the OEM business, although no names can of course be mentioned here. However, it is typical for JL Audio to only start manufacturing at a very high-quality level. The products have received countless awards, for example the F213 subwoofer in the install version was named „Product Of The Year“ by Absolute Sound.

optimizations may make sense. Not to forget that you are sometimes forced to use a suboptimal location for aesthetic reasons. In these and other problem cases, in particular, an external, active crossover such as the CR-1 comes into play.

Of course, it doesn't have to be the Gotham V2 either. Its DNA can be found individually downscaled in all of the smaller JL Audio models. Alternatively, two slightly smaller and more affordable models can be selected, which makes perfect sense due to the double number of sound generation centers with reduced excitation of the room modes in the same place and reduced lifting work of the drivers.

The „Mission Superbass“ knows no limits, apart from budget and common sense. A JL Audio customer – we saw photos of the home cinema installation – treated himself to a total of six Gotham V2s, stacked in groups of three, in special brackets. Perhaps comforting for all normal wage earners that he has managed the whole thing over a period of three years. We'd love to hear that.

Stunning & shockingly good

The Superbass mission should succeed. We STEREO editors have long been convinced of the value of high-quality subwoofer support thanks to such, admittedly rather rare experiences. There remains much more than “just” the bass as a benefit, the whole sonic picture becomes more relaxed, more natural and confident, audibly larger and wider, because the human brain immediately perceives through the lower frequencies and more clean energy in the lower registers that this has to be a large room; the sense



The JL Audio Gotham V2 belongs to the absolute crème de la crème of subwoofers in terms of potency and adjustment options. World class!

of space is much more obvious. Otherwise sometimes sharp hissing sounds are softened. If you take the subwoofer out of the playback chain after the best possible measurement, room EQ and thus ideal integration and a few tracks you have heard, you are horrified at how much is suddenly missing.

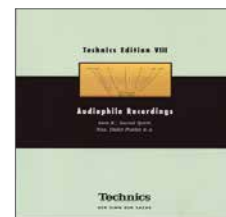
JL Audio's flagship Gotham V2 stands as a technology leader, as „Formula One“, which is supposed to – and can – show what is possible in the lower layers in terms of outstanding quality. It masters both the depth down to below 20 Hertz and the ultimate precision with virtuosity – and not least thanks to the 4.5 kilowatt amplifier power and efficiency, it is a master of volume, which makes it an absolute reference for both music and cinema beyond our test experience. It thus eludes, for obvious reasons, its assessability by moving into the „high-end extreme“. It doesn't get any better. Wow! ■



With the optional, active crossover CR-1, the subwoofer is placed on an equal footing with the existing loudspeakers, while relieving them and being perfectly integrated.

WHAT WE'VE HEARD

**Various Artists:
Technics Edition VIII**



Sonically superior compilation. Recommended tracks: „Sacred Spirit – Legends“ and „Connie Williams – Lady Thinks Like A Man“

CONTACT

ATR - Audio Trade
Tel.: +49 208 882660
www.audiotra.de

JL Audio
www.jlaudio.com