

Baby Boomer

Adam Rayner gets to grips with the smallest B&W woofer he's ever seen...



The ASW608 is a mere 260mm wide

Described as the most compact of the 600 series subwoofers, I was wondering how well this wee unit would work with my reference speakers – currently a thumping great set of Bowers & Wilkins 800 series. Now you would never order a woofer as dinky as this and a set of main speakers as mighty as the 800s, but as this beastie is made with equally-rugged components, right down to the Kevlar fibres impregnating the resin and paper pulp cone, I figured it'd be okay to give it a spin.

The 608 is attractively put together, with the B&W badge appearing both on the grille and the soft-to-the-touch front panel. The rear controls are minor but well thought out, with a choice of EQ curves preset by switches and the usual phase, gain and crossover point controls.

I was worried that I really should go get a smaller system to test the subwoofer against and that I was merely being both cruel and lazy, but I've ended up utterly astonished at

just how capable a piece of kit this is. Of course, something has to give at this entry-level price – and you don't get any bone-grasping bass – but the lack of compromise in terms of sheer musicality and depth of bass extension is incredible.

I have never, ever heard an 8in woofer do what this did. I ran through the 15Hz rumbles at the beginning of Gustav's *Mars*, on the Telarc recording, and – stuff me with a kipper – this tiny thing created some actual room feeling, even underneath the mighty soundstage of the masterful 800 series floorstanders.

With movies I gave it some *Evan Almighty* (DVD) and although it was less keen on the biblical deluge stuff, it made a better than fair fist at moments like sudden animal grunts.

In the right-sized room this could be a proper musical treat for buyers more interested in accuracy than hurting the cat. It is limited by the low price and power, but it is pure B&W – musical, able, well-made and bloody gorgeous to behold ●

AV/CV

Product: Sealed 200W active subwoofer with a long-throw but small woofer cone

Position: Smallest woofer of the 600 series, which is itself a notch down from the 800 series

Peers: Acoustic Energy Aelite subwoofer; Anthony Gallo TR-1; MJ Acoustics Pro 50 MkII

→ Specifications

Drive Unit: 8in paper pulp/Kevlar fibre and resin long-throw design

Enclosure Type: sealed

Frequency Response: 32Hz-40/140Hz +/-3dB (-6dB @ 23Hz position A)

Onboard Power: 200W RMS from onboard Class D amp

Dimensions: 260(h) x 260(w) x 330(d)mm

Weight: 8.85Kg

Connections: phono sockets and binding-post speaker level inputs; 3.5mm trigger jack socket



HCC VERDICT

B&W ASW608
£300 approx

Price check: www.techradar.com/423217

Highs: Astonishing grip and musical low-end control for one so small; beautifully made

Lows: Limited by its size; will make complaining noises if overdriven

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5