

As Reviewed in
SOUND & VISION ONLINE

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Hsu VTF-3 MK 3 Turbo (\$799; without Turbocharger, \$699; Turbocharger purchased separately, \$199)

What's in the Box?

- **Driver:** 12-inch
- **Rated amplifier power:** 350 watts continuous
- **Cabinet design:** side-firing, dual rear ports
- **Finish:** black or maple
- **Controls:** level, continuously variable low-pass crossover (24 dB/octave, 30 to 90 Hz), crossover bypass, phase switch (0, 180 degrees), bass extension (1 port open or with Turbo 18Hz, 2 ports open with no Turbo 25 Hz), auto-on/on switch
- **Ins & outs:** dual line-level inputs, dual speaker-level inputs and outputs
- **Warranty:** 7 years (2 years on amplifier)

[Photo Gallery](#)

How Big Is It?

- **Dimensions (WxHxD):** subwoofer, 17 x 22 x 25 inches; Turbocharger, 17 x 10.5 x 11.5 inches
- **Cabinet volume:** 5.5 cubic feet

- **Footprint:** 3 square feet
- **Weight:** subwoofer, 90 pounds; Turbocharger, 25.5 pounds

Setup

When subwoofers start nudging the 100-pound mark, you certainly don't lift with your back — and you don't lift with your legs, either. You have someone else lift it. Better yet, don't lift it at all; slide it across the carpet. The VTF-3 MK3 is imposing, all the more so with the Turbocharger that either inspired The Blue Man Group or was inspired by it. The Turbo is a passive device with tubes that connect to the VTF-3's ports, lengthening them and effectively doubling port volume to extend low-frequency output. Controls are straightforward, with no line-level output and a simple two-position phase switch. The low-pass crossover reaches up to about 90 Hz, which is high enough to blend with most satellites. This is a side-firing design, so take care to avoid jamming the driver right up against a wall. (Interestingly Hsu suggests placing the sub so the driver faces into the back of your sofa, with 1 or 2 inches of spacing, to provide good upper bass that is hard to localize.) Similarly, keep in mind that the Turbocharger ports face perpendicularly to the driver, another thing to think about before you start dragging the subwoofer around the carpet.

How Low Does It Go?

- **Bass limit** (with Turbocharger): 16 Hz at 83 dB SPL (maximum 10% distortion)

How Big the Bang?

- **Average maximum output, 25 to 62 Hz** (with Turbocharger): 105 dB SPL
- **Maximum output** (with Turbocharger): 109 dB SPL at 50 Hz
- **Dollars per dB:** \$7.61

How Did It Sound?

Saint-Saens The VTF-3 MK 3 Turbo was made for Saint-Saens' Organ Symphony or, for that matter, any organ recording. It can dig down to an honest 16 Hz and play it both loudly and musically. The sound of the pipes was very realistic, with the entire harmonic structure, from fundamental on up, well balanced to produce a huge, natural sound. If you don't listen to organ music, or in general to material with content below 25 Hz, you probably don't need the Turbo; it's job is to augment the very bottom end, which it does superbly.

Linkin Park I have listened to this track on hundreds of subs, and rarely have I heard it reproduced so well. The lowest notes of the bass line were smooth at low and medium volume; even at very high volume, the sub was pretty tight and free of resonance. The upper notes had a good snap to them, with not a hint of sloppiness or blooming. This recording has a good low end but not huge amounts of rock-bottom energy; so the Turbo helped, but the VTF-3 MK3 also sounded pretty darn good without it.

Superman Returns Space Shuttle + Airplane + Lois Lane = Trouble. It also equals some very impressive LFE. An earthquake in a toy model is a warm-up to a terrific action sequence, and the VTF-3 MK3 Turbo was eager to tackle it. The ambient rumble was

loud, the explosions were clean, and rocket engines blasted. Even when I pushed playback levels to "11" the sub complied with minimal protest. Turbo-assisted, it was extremely capable in the lowest octave.

Godzilla If you want to know what a gigantic sea monster sounds like when it destroys a city, you can either be there or listen to it through a VTF-3 MK3 Turbo. This sub was wildly impressive on this movie, delivering beaucoup bass, low and loud. It seemed to have an endless supply of ambient rumble and didn't flinch when hit with explosions. When I cranked it up, it just got louder. Sure, it has its limits, but your neighbors will probably reach theirs first. Part of the fun of this kind of movie is feeling the room shake, and the Turbocharger really helps make it happen.

What's the Bottom Line?

The VTF-3 MK3 Turbo is the total subwoofer package, packing solid bass extension, strong, clean output, snappy dynamics, and smooth tonal response. It sounds equally good on music, where its refined performance shines, and on movies, where it kicks butt like Chuck Norris. It has its limits, but it was the most convincing high-output deep-bass performer in this group, thanks in part to the Turbocharger extension ports, which are the real deal. Plus, the Turbo just looks so cool. If you want the police knocking on your door, this is the sub for you.

Manufacturer

Hsu Research

www.hsuresearch.com

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