

When worlds collide

Adam Rayner tries to find the limits of JL Audio's entry-level cinema woofer – and discovers that the brand's in-car heritage pays dividends in the home

REGULAR READERS WILL know that we've already reviewed the big brother of this subwoofer, the JL Audio Fathom F212. That product has two mighty 12in drivers and a 3,000W amplifier. This, the Fathom F110 (for 'one driver, 10in') only uses 900W. I say 'only' as JL Audio are not scared to use bigger power supplies. Its history is in the car audio world where sound quality competitions demand massive reserves. In fact, its flagship Gotham home cinema sub may never come to Europe as the amplifier on the back puts out so much RF it'd never get EU CE marking. The Fathom F110 is, however, approved in Europe, despite being as European as a deep suthen' clam chowder.

The £2,000 ticket is an eye-opener but do consider the amp power. Then, look at the pro-grade microphone, cracking auto-EQ system, easy operation and high-end build quality. With JL Audio's home cinema gear, you're benefitting from a whole culture of low-end love, a two-decade drive to excellence. And, finally, there's the driver...

You won't be able to fathom [*nice pun – Ed*] how the FCAM™ (Floating Cone Attach Method) polypropylene cone is screwed in. The cone is itself patented and JL Audio's website goes deeper into subwoofer tech than most readers will want to know. It's heavy-duty and provides up to four inches of excursion – in the 'Peers' section of our AV Info box (below) I've included a near-£4K woofer

AV INFO

PRODUCT: High-end 10in cinema subwoofer

POSITION: The entry level for JL Audio home subwoofers

PEERS: MJ Acoustics MJ 800; Totem Thunder; Paradigm Sub 1

with an 18in driver, as you will need that to equal the F110's air-pushing low-frequency prowess.

Ready to rumble

The automatic room optimisation system is a one-button-and-sit-there-being-a-mic-stand thing. It shakes your room and then you are green to go.



For nostalgia's sake I tested this with a track I once used to try to hurt a Paradigm SUB2, called *More Bass, More Boom, More Bottom* – just to hear it glide accurately along to the best audiophile CD ever made – and then revisited the film *Limitless* on Blu-ray so I could compare it directly with the Fathom F212.

While this smaller product naturally has a lesser degree of perceived scale and size, the Fathom F110 is like a 10in active sub on steroids. The cone goes in and out more. It goes faster. It stops more quickly and with its powerful amplifier can switch from a mere loud rumble to a massive wavefront of bass in the blink of any eye.

The door being beaten off the frame of the fortress apartment at the start of *Limitless* came with a very large impact and a tremendously deep under-rumble. And the times in the narrative when the protagonist is under the influence of the performance-enhancing drug were accompanied by the deep, rich bass that is intended to evoke disorientation. The F110 literally wobbles the air around you, and reaches so far down it could wake the dead.

Small, cute and pretty, but with terrifying potency when provoked, the performance here is worthy of the price tag. If you can afford it, this is American bass at its most rich, opulent, controlled and yet brash ■

SPECIFICATIONS

DRIVE UNIT: 1 x 10in W7 FCAM™ (Floating Cone Attach Method) Polypropylene W-Cone, with 'overall surround', 'elevated frame cooling' and 'radially cross drilled pole piece'

ENCLOSURE: Sealed, with driver, mic socket and control panel hidden under the front grille

FREQUENCY RESPONSE: 27Hz-110Hz +/-1.5dB; -3dB @25Hz; -10dB @ 19Hz

ON-BOARD POWER: 900W

REMOTE CONTROL: No

DIMENSIONS: 328(w) x 397(h) x 439(d)mm

WEIGHT: 30kg

CONNECTIONS: Phono mono/stereo input; balanced stereo XLR inputs; balanced XLR output for feeding to slave units

HCC VERDICT

JL Audio F110

→ £2,300 Approx → www.av-techsolutions.co.uk
→ Tel: 07974 735 998

HIGHS: Neatly designed and solidly built; easy to operate; efficient EQ system; powerful, poised performance

LOWS: Hand-built in the USA so unavoidably costly; only available in black...

Performance ★★★★★

Design ★★★★★

Features ★★★★★

Overall ★★★★★