

**HOME CINEMA**  
Choice  
HIGHLY  
RECOMMENDED



With a new range of subwoofers to sample, **Richard Stevenson** naturally opted for the flagship 15in model

# Anthra aims for best of both

Heading up a trio of new premium subwoofers from British brand Monitor Audio, the Anthra W15 arrived at my home cinema via a puce-face courier struggling under the weight. It came in one of the smallest boxes I've seen for a 15in sub, suggesting a model with the density of a small star, plus instant appeal for anyone turned off by the trend of big-driver bassmakers having equally gargantuan cabinets.

Out of the packaging, the W15's shape is a perfect cube measuring 439mm per side, and therefore barely much bigger than my incumbent 12in woofer. The sealed 25mm-thick MDF cabinet adds a 36mm-thick front baffle for increased solidity, while extensive internal bracing with supporting spars adds further mass to the design. Chuck in the 15in driver and 1,400W Class D amp, and you have a relatively compact beast weighing over 35kg and promising very serious woofing ability... sort of a micro Rottweiler.

The fit and finish are Crufts standard, too. The all-round gloss finish, in white or black, is lush, and the amp at the rear is a proper MA-designed part with innovative cooling channels, rather than a typical off-the-shelf unit. The Anthra W15's driver is pure Monitor Audio too, its cone material being the ceramic-coated aluminium/magnesium (C-CAM) the manufacturer has favoured for decades. Here its continuous profile has a series of dimples (aka Rigid Surface Technology II) that further increases its stiffness-to-weight ratio to maintain the shape when the going gets tough.

### Three's company

Should the W15 sound a little rich in price or specification, its Anthra W12 stablemate (£1,900) gets a 12in driver powered by a 900W Class D amplifier, while the petit Anthra W10 (£1,650) mates its 10in driver to 425W amp. No fancy Latin numerals for the naming convention here, or we might have ended up with an AnthraX.

A host of neat design touches span the range, including a front panel colour-changing status LED that's easily dimmable from 100% to off using Monitor Audio's MaestroUnite app, and a smooth oversized trim ring to hide the otherwise 'ugly' driver bolts. All Anthra subs sit on four feet that can be used with supplied bullet spikes; with little pull-off flat rubber feet to stop it going walkabout on hard floors; or bare plastic for dense carpet.

Around the back is an LCD display with a rotary/push control to access settings. I have no idea why it's there, as the MaestroUnite app covers every setting on the sub and more from the comfort of your sofa, and even if you did need to use the display its positioning is awkward. Below it are balanced XLR connections for LFE, and unbalanced RCAs for stereo or LFE, all with loop outs for daisy-chaining

more subs. There's also a 12V trigger but nothing else, so you are out of luck if you want a high-level connection.

Arguably also on the missing list at this price point is any form of automated EQ, although this is less of an issue in an era of sub-channel correcting AVR systems like Audyssey MultEQ-X and Dirac Live, and Monitor Audio's app – and the sub's 28-bit DSP – provides plenty of manual EQ adjustments for hardcore fettlers.

In fact, the MaestroUnite app is really good. It connects over Bluetooth and then hooks the sub to your Wi-Fi for updates, >

### AV INFO

**PRODUCT:** 15in sealed subwoofer with app-based EQ

**POSITION:** Largest model in Monitor Audio's new Anthra series

**PEERS:** REL S510; KEF KC92; B&W DB3D



1. The C-CAM driver cone features MA's Rigid Surface profile to improve rigidity and reduce distortion

2. The sub's fabric, circular grille affixes magnetically

3. 12in and 10in models complete the Anthra range

4. The Maestro Unite app covers gain, phase and low-pass filter settings, plus preset and custom EQs

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and offers a wealth of fine-tuning options. That includes 360-degree variable phase, low-pass filter settings in 1Hz steps, and gain adjustment in 0.1dB increments. There are three standard EQ presets and three custom ones, the latter offering eight-band adjustment as parametric, low-shelf, high-shelf or high-pass filters. This is down to granular 1Hz and +/- 0.1dB adjustments, with variable Q-factor on the parametric curve filters.

The potential to get yourself in an audio pickle here is very high. It's best to start off with one of the three standard filters: Music offers a flat EQ response down to 10Hz, Movie gently drifts down the sub-bass to avoid LFE drowning the movie mix, and Impact curves the response towards a rather fruity peak around 80Hz-90Hz.

### Big boy bass

As 15in subs go, the Anthra W15's compact size, sumptuous design, sealed cabinet and sophisticated app feel very 'refined'. Additionally, MA's own description suggests the Anthra series majors on musicality and depth. So, is this a subwoofer best left to music-lovers who can't get their ears around more than two channels? Thankfully, no. The W15 is a smooth and sophisticated performer with articulation in the lower frequencies to give detail to bass instruments, but it is just at home using its big boy driver/amp combo to deliver insane levels of LFE.

Setup in my room was aided by the sealed cabinet and knowing where to get the best results; front wall and one-third in from the side. Yet without onboard EQ it remains worth experimenting with room position, which will be easiest on carpet with those easy-to-slide plastic feet fitted.

Duly balanced and set to the Movie EQ preset, *Red Notice* (Netflix) opens with Dwayne Johnson chasing a wily Ryan Reynolds through the museum. The scene is filled with clattering scaffolding and OTT thumps of people falling into canopies and pavements, here all given the full-fat treatment of a subwoofer set a little hot; nudging the gain down pulled it all together, letting the W15 fill the room with deep, detailed LFE. A Porsche Taycan 'roars' out of a garage to a backdrop of Rage Against the Machine, only to get hit by a camper van. The collision brought a room-shaking boom that sounded like two planets colliding.

### SPECIFICATIONS

**DRIVERS:** 1 x 15in C-CAM RST II cone **ENCLOSURE:** Sealed **ONBOARD POWER (CLAIMED):** 1,400W (RMS)/2,500W (peak) **FREQUENCY RESPONSE (CLAIMED):** 20Hz-200Hz (16Hz, -6dB) **REMOTE CONTROL:** No. MaestroUnite app instead **DIMENSIONS:** 439(w) x 439(h) x 439(d)mm **WEIGHT:** 35.4kg

**FEATURES:** Balanced XLR input/output; stereo RCA input/output; 12V trigger; MaestroUnite control/settings app with 360-degree phase, 3 x EQ presets (Music, Movie, Impact), 3 x custom EQ presets with 8-band EQ; front indicator LED; 28-bit DSP engine; magnetic grille supplied; rear-panel display

### TESTED WITH



**RED NOTICE:** Comedy action with Ryan Reynolds, Dwayne Johnson and Gal Gadot, *Red Notice* (Netflix) offers ridiculous set-pieces, a pacey, twisty plot and a Dolby Atmos soundmix that lacks subtlety but goes up to 11. Apparently sequels are in the works, perhaps on the proviso they don't cost the same \$200m to make.

Diving into the custom EQ settings, I ended up with a curve looking a lot more like the Impact preset to give the W15 a little extra attack, punching up a section around 70Hz-90Hz and tailing off lower to keep the room in check. This sounded even more articulate, but still with real LFE grunt – the Anthra W15 is not the tightest or fastest subwoofer in the lowest octaves, but able to move serious air and resolve a lot of effects at different frequencies.

This is a subwoofer with a big enveloping sound, rich in detail and offering excellent extension – all things that work well with home cinema – yet it has an arguably even more impressive trick behind its gloss exterior, and that's an audiophile performance with two-channel music. Paired with large standmount speakers driven by bridged channels of a Marantz AMP10 (HCC #350), the W15's custom EQ tools and a well-tuned pair of ears made it very simple to integrate for adding superb depth and weight to recordings.

It can do that hard-to-explain trick of bringing warmth and presence to vocals while adding space and air to upper frequencies. French artist Yoann Lemoine's voice on Woodkid's 'Highway 27' (Tidal) soared with the addition of the W15 in the stereo mix, adding a gravelly richness and realism to his vocals. On the same *S76* album, the track 'Goliath' came across with swelling bass and drums with fabulous texture.

### All-round Anthra

Monitor Audio's brief of musicality and depth for the Anthra range rings true with the mighty W15 – it's one of the best 'stereo music' subs I have auditioned around its price. It's movie performance is exhilarating too, and I wouldn't be surprised if it could give more in terms of speed and slam with help from an REW/PC calibration or third-party bass EQ system. All the ingredients are there: power aplenty, a virtually resonance-free cabinet and that sophisticated 15in C-CAM driver. Consider this a cracking all-rounder! ■

### HCC VERDICT



**Monitor Audio Anthra W15**

→ £2,500 → [www.monitoraudio.com](http://www.monitoraudio.com)

**WE SAY:** Flying the flag for the new Anthra series, the W15 proves to be a fantastic sub for music and movies, and offers plenty of tweaking flexibility. And it's not huge either!

5. The W15's rear panel has XLR and RCA in/outs, 12V trigger and settings display controlled by a push/rotary knob