

For many people, \$1,000 seems to be some kind of magical tipping point where things get ‘expensive.’ It is not a tipping point based on anything rational, of course, and is simply a prejudice based on the addition of another digit in our decimal numbering system. Nonetheless, that mental block tends to cap budgets for certain non-essential items, and one of those items is certainly subwoofers. We can see evidence of this in the wide range of choices in subs around this price point. We at Audioholics have decided to cater to this irrational bias by creating a list of our preferred choices in this range that don’t exceed \$1,000 to help those shopping for subs with this budget in mind.

There aren’t many really bad subwoofers at this pricing, but some are more capable than others. That is to be expected, given Hoffman’s Iron Law which is that loudspeakers, and thus subwoofers, can have two of the following quantities but never all three: deep bass, high-sensitivity (which translates into powerful output for subwoofers), and small enclosure size. This is a consequence of physics. Most subwoofers in this price range tend to favor small enclosure size at the expense of extension or output or some combination of both. The reason for that is because large subs don’t tend to fly off store shelves since they take up so much floor space. However, we at Audioholics place a higher priority on performance, and so our list is more geared toward aspects of performance, although we do weigh other considerations in this selection as well.

[Subwoofer Set Up & Optimization YouTube Discussion](#)

Hsu Research VTF-3 mk5

MSRP: \$800

[VTF-3 mk5 Product Page](#)



Ever since its launch over five years ago, the **Hsu Research VTF-3 mk5** remains one of the most consistently recommended subwoofers by audio enthusiasts and not without good reason. It offers both tremendous output as well as solid low-frequency extension down to 20Hz. But it is not just quantity of bass that is produced but very high-quality bass, so the sound is clean and linear with low-distortion as well as sharp with low group delay. One of the reasons for this is Hsu uses a large driver in a large cabinet, and it is the only home audio driver in our roundup to use a 15" woofer which gives it over 50% greater surface area than a typical 12" cone. That means it doesn't need as much excursion to produce the same loudness as a smaller cone nor will it need as much electrical power. That also alleviates mechanical stress for the same loudness level which lowers distortion. This grants the VTF-3 mk5 a big performance advantage, but that isn't all it has to offer. Variable tuning ability, as well as a Q control, allows the user to customize the low end of the response so users can either temper or accentuate deep bass per their preference. One innovative design cue is the use of differing port diameters in order to optimize the variable tuning ability, which follows Hsu's proclivity in pushing port design technology forward for practical benefits. The VTF-3 mk5 also comes with a true satin black finish that is quite a bit finer than is found on many subs of even greater cost. On top of all this, you get Hsu's renowned customer service as well as reliability. Hsu Research has been in the subwoofer business for a long time, and years of continuous improvement has led to the VTF-3 mk5, one of the top subs in its price range.

Honorable mention: If you want the power of Hsu's beefy 15" driver but need a smaller cabinet and are willing to give up some deep bass headroom, check out our review of the [Hsu Research ULS-15 mk2 Subwoofer](#). On the other hand, if you can accommodate a larger cabinet and want more powerful deep bass, check out [HSU's VTF15h mk2](#), although that doesn't quite qualify for this list since shipping costs push it a tad over \$1k.

SVS PB-2000 Pro

MSRP: \$900 (Free shipping)

[PB-2000 Pro Product Page](#)



In late 2019, SVS refreshed their [2000 series subs](#) to integrate some of the technology seen in their higher-end product lines. Many people thought that would amount to merely the addition of SVS Subwoofer Control app, but it turns out they majorly underestimated the improvements that were implemented. Their ported box cabinet sub, now redubbed the PB-2000 Pro, saw a redesign in every facet, from cabinet to amplifier to driver. Many of the new design cues were clearly trickled down from the PB-3000 which is very much a good thing seeing as how the PB-3000 was one of our all-time favorite SVS subwoofers. The SVS PB-2000 Pro keeps the superlative low-distortion and extension that SVS is known or while dramatically improving mid-bass headroom. That alone would have been worth the cost increase, but SVS also adds in

their app control which comes with a three-band parametric equalizer, as well as support for a sealed operating mode. The PB-2000 Pro is not a small sub but it is not a really large or unsightly one either, and SVS finds their usual optimal balance between performance, features, industrial design, not to mention their gold-standard setting post-purchase support that includes a 5-year warranty and 45-day in-home trial with paid return shipping. SVS also has another superbly well-rounded product in the [PB-2000 Pro](#), and it merits close consideration in its price range.

Honorable mention: For those who want the same performance in a smaller footprint or less conventional form factor, check out its taller brother, the [PC-2000 Pro](#). For those who are willing to give up deep bass headroom in favor of a smaller form factor, SVS also has the [SB-2000 Pro](#).

Monoprice Monolith 12" THX Ultra

MSRP: \$800

[Monolith 12" THX Ultra Product Page](#) | [Buy @ Amazon](#)



The market for heavy-duty home audio subwoofers is filled with tough competition, so if you want to make a mark in it, you need to bring something serious to raise anyone's eyebrows. Monoprice did just that in 2017 when they launched their THX-certified Monolith line. Our review of the [10" THX Select and 12" THX Ultra](#) found them to have perhaps the heaviest-duty build quality in their market segment. The 12" THX Ultra weighs nearly 100 lbs thanks to its massive HDF

construction and brawny driver. There is more to the 12" THX Ultra than tank-like build quality; its measured performance was found to be first-class in sound quality as well. The 12" THX Ultra looks like a bruiser, but it is a truly high-fidelity subwoofer for anyone mistaking it for a merely something to make explosions sound loud. It turned in some extraordinarily low distortion numbers as well as phenomenally low group delay for a ported subwoofer. It can produce a lot of bass but never at the expense of sound quality, which is mandated by its THX certification. Among some of the unique features that it boasts in its price range, outside of its builder-like build quality, is the support for different port tuning points as well as XLR inputs and outputs. It ain't the prettiest sub in our round-up (although its brute force aesthetic will be sure to appeal to some), but you are getting a whole lot of sub for your money. It is very much a product where the first priority of the design was to achieve certain performance targets rather than to look cute next to an entertainment center.

Honorable mention: If you want the same over-the-top build quality as the Monolith 12" THX Ultra but need something smaller than that behemoth, check out its sealed sibling, the [Monolith M12-S](#), although it does give up significant deep bass headroom compared to its enormous ported brother.

Rythmik Audio FVX12

MSRP: \$900

[FVX12 Product Page](#)



Rythmik Audio has carved a name for itself among audio enthusiasts for manufacturing high-output and deep digging subs that still hold audiophile sound quality. Their recipe for this performance lay in their 'Direct Servo' technology where a sensor monitors the voice coil position, and if the voice coil position doesn't match the amplifier signal, the amp immediately issues a corrective signal. This helps to keep the cone where it is supposed to be to ensure linear sound reproduction. Their formidable ported entry in the \$900 price point is the FVX12, a hefty sub that leverages its large size to achieve extremely deep bass frequencies. In fact, it may be the deepest digging subwoofer in our roundup with a -6dB point of 14Hz in its specified response, a frequency that is effectively below the range of human hearing. As a subwoofer with variable tuning, the user can choose to give up some of that extreme extension in favor of increasing headroom in the low-end of the response. The FVX12 uses a very capable driver, the DS1204, which is a fairly heavy-duty 12" with an aluminum cone that is well suited for clean deep bass. Their amplifier is no slouch either; it uses a 400-watt UcD module from Hypex, a high-regarded manufacturer of Class-D amplifiers. Onboard the amplifier is a band of parametric EQ which is a nice add-on considering the system is an analog design. The FVX12 looks like a solid offering at this price point for those who want extreme deep bass without sacrificing accuracy.

Honorable mention: An interesting sub-\$1k offering from Rythmik that should provide a substantial level of output for a small footprint is the L22 which stacks two

12” woofers in a sealed enclosure and drives them with a 600-watt amp. It still won’t equal the FVX12 for deep bass output, but should really pack a punch if you need a lot of output without giving up a lot of floor space.

MartinLogan Dynamo 800X

MSRP: \$850

[Dynamo 800X Product Page](#) | [Buy @ Amazon](#)



We at Audioholics acknowledge there are situations where a subwoofer must necessarily be small and unobtrusive. There are, of course, inevitable performance penalties for this, but some bass is better than no bass. You can see how much we liked the new Dynamos from MartinLogan in our [review of the 600X and 1600X](#), and while we didn’t get a chance to measure the 800X specifically, we are familiar with the technology and performance that can be expected, so we think the 800X would be a great choice for those needing something that does not have a bulky physical presence. The 800X uses a light but long-throw 10” driver that should excel at mid-bass frequencies while still producing some deep bass output. It packs a 300-watt Class-D amp that is largely controlled by MartinLogan’s subwoofer control app, and it even comes with ARC room correction so the user doesn’t have to rely on stock AVR room correction algorithms which don’t tend to be as good in smoothing out the

bass response. The 800X's diminutive size is the real draw here, as it is essentially only slightly larger than a 12" cube, but, as we have personally experienced, it certainly sounds larger than it looks. It also uses a very smooth satin black finish that should help it disappear even further, as well as the ability to be used as a front-firing or down-firing subwoofer per the user's preference. On top of that, it has built-in support for MartinLogan's SWT-X wireless subwoofer receiver, so that is one less cord that needs to be run, further helping the 800X to remain discreet. MartinLogan attempts to pack a lot of power and fidelity into a small enclosure in the 800X, and we think it is one of the best small subs that can be had for under \$1k.

Honorable mention: Monitor Audio is a reliably good loudspeaker and their [Radius 390 Subwoofer](#) is a small, \$950 sub that may have some deep bass muscle thanks to its use of passive radiators that can be used to wring deep bass out of small enclosures.

JBL Professional EON618S

MSRP: \$800 (currently on sale for \$699)

[EON618S Product Page](#) | [Buy @ Amazon](#)



What if you want some of the loudest bass you can possibly get for under \$1k, and you are prepared to accept all the disadvantages that come with that criteria? Enter the JBL Professional EON618S. It is a sound reinforcement subwoofer meant for very large venues like auditoriums and is not a home audio subwoofer, but it could be used

as a home audio sub if you are crazy enough. It uses a high sensitivity 18" driver as well as an efficient 500-watt Class-D amplifier in a cabinet tuned for high output. There are, of course, a lot of drawbacks of using a pro-audio sub in a domestic setting. Firstly, it is huge and unsightly. Aesthetics are not a consideration in its design at all. Second, with a -3dB point of 42.5 Hz, it just doesn't do deep bass; it's all about the mid-bass since it was made to reproduce acoustic instruments and speech, neither of which has substantial deep bass content. Third, it uses pro-audio industry inputs which can sometimes complicate connectivity with consumer gear. Fourth, a sub with such a high port tuning frequency will have relatively high group delay at that frequency, so it might not have the sharpest transient response. However, if you can deal with those caveats, the EON618S is specified to be capable of 134dB (likely at 1m) which all of the other subs in our roundup combined would possibly be unable to equal. Do you want "chest-punch" bass? This sub will punch you so hard in the chest that it will cave in your ribcage. If you like your music loud above all, this is the sub for you. It's also a great sub if you like to collect eviction notices and noise citations.

Honorable mention: For something that is even crazier for under \$1k, you could buy five of these [Dayton Audio SUB-1200 12" subwoofers](#) and build an apparatus from them that could enclose your head like a subwoofer helmet. Think of the bass nirvana you can be in with your skull enveloped by subwoofers just inches away on all sides!

\$800-900 Subwoofer Round-up Comparison Table				
Model	Type	Amplifier	Frequency Response	Price
Hsu Research VTF-3 mk5	Variable Tuning Ported, 15" cone	500-watt Class-A/B	(+/-2dB) 17Hz - 200Hz	\$799 + \$ S/H
Monoprice Monolith 12" THX Ultra	Variable Tuning Ported, 1" cone	500-watt Class-D	(-6dB) 18Hz - 200Hz	\$799
Rythmik Audio FVX12	Variable Tuning Ported, 12" cone	400-watt Class-D	(-6dB at 14Hz) 14Hz - 200Hz	\$899
MartinLogan Dynamo 800X	Sealed, 10" cone	300-watt Class-D	(+/-3dB) 24Hz - 200Hz	\$850
SVS PB-2000 Pro	Ported, 12" cone	550-watt Class-D	(+/-3dB) 16Hz - 290Hz	\$900
JBL Professional EON618S	Ported, 18" cone	500-watt Class-D	(-3dB) 42.5Hz - 150Hz	\$800

Conclusion



In our previous round-up, we looked at a group of some of the best \$500 subwoofers available. Those subs could put out a decent bass sound but didn't really have the kind of dynamic range that would be desired for a dedicated home theater or listening room. In this round-up of sub-\$1k subwoofers, we are starting to get to that point, although users may still want multiples of these for a really powerful cinematic experience (except the JBL EON618S which should have all the output that most anyone could desire). In our next round-up, we will look at subs in the \$1,400 to \$1,500 range which is very much a step above in terms of

performance, build quality, and features from what we have selected in this article. Stay tuned to see what can be had when your budget, as well as floor space, is a bit more flexible and accommodating.