

Test Bench

Definitive Technology SuperCube 4000 Subwoofer

PRICE: \$799 **AT A GLANCE:** Infrared remote control included • Optional wireless kit • Disappearing alphanumeric display behind grille

The Real Woofin' Deal



Definitive Technology SuperCube 4000

At \$799, the diminutive Definitive Technology SuperCube 4000 isn't "recycle enough aluminum cans and buy it" cheap, but it's still in the reasonably affordable price range for a large percentage of home theater enthusiasts.

Although Def Tech calls it a SuperCube, the actual dimensions are 11 inches wide x 11½ inches tall x 12 inches deep, which isn't strictly a cube according to my high school geometry book. Evidently, SuperApproximately-ACube and SuperCubeLike were already trademarked, so Def Tech had to settle for the close-to-accurate SuperCube. Regardless, the compact size makes it super easy to place in a room, and fairly inconspicuous wherever you place it. Don't let the SC4000's small form factor fool you, though, because it's one of the most feature-packed and easiest-to-set-up subwoofers I've encountered, regardless of price. It's also surprisingly heavy (around 25 pounds) for its size.

As with Def Tech's other SuperCube subwoofers, the SC4000 is wrapped with a black grille cloth and topped with a gloss-black cap. It has a single, forward-firing, 8-inch active driver that's pressure coupled to a pair of side-firing, 8-inch, passive, low-bass radiators. Def Tech says this arrangement provides more piston surface area than that of a 12-inch driver. Inside is a newly designed, switching tracking amplifier rated at 1,200 watts with a 56-bit, digital-signal processor (DSP) that divides the subwoofer's playback frequency range into a number of bands. When the DSP detects distortion in one of the bands (of frequencies—not the

Definitive Technology SuperCube 4000 Subwoofer
PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
BUILD QUALITY ★★★★★
VALUE ★★★★★

musicians you're listening to), it applies an appropriate amount of compression or limiting to that particular narrow band, which Def Tech claims vastly reduces audible compression artifacts.

Features Packed With Fundamentals

As I mentioned, Def Tech has stuffed the SC4000 chock-a-block with convenience- and performance-related features. For starters, the SC4000 has an auto-power setting that puts the internal amplifier in idle mode less than 30 minutes after the audio signal ends. The amplifier sips a miserly half-watt or less of current in idle mode; that's a level Def Tech says meets international standards for low-energy consumption. (Your utility company will thank you. I think...) The SC4000 also has a 12-volt trigger input on the back panel that can be used in conjunction with many AVRs, pre-pros, and automation systems to automatically turn it on and off with the rest of the system. This is a rare find in a modestly priced subwoofer that should make for more annoyance-free operation.

A slightly more common feature is the Performance Optimizer Remote (POR) Def Tech includes with the subwoofer. It's a thin, credit-card-size, IR remote control that's destined to be lost in the couch more than once (hell, it's small enough to get lost in your butt crack if you're not looking before you sit down), but it's extremely useful during setup

because it allows you to change volume, phase (0, 90, 280, and 270 degrees), and the low-pass crossover point (from 40 hertz to 150 Hz) without having to move from the main seating position. That's a big timesaver.

Because these particular parameters tend to be set and forget, you could throw the POR in a drawer and pretend it never existed. But, you might want to keep it around to toggle the Night Mode on and off. In this mode, the DSP applies dynamic range compression in order to prevent the loudest bass in a soundtrack from suddenly blasting away and waking up your 2-year-old, the dog, Grandma, and the grumpy people who live next door and like to call the police. Depending on your tastes in music and listening habits, you might prefer to run the subwoofer a little louder with movies than with music.

If this is the case, you can also use the remote to adjust the volume according to the source material. And if a couple of decibels change in volume isn't enough for you, the SC4000 has four different, preset, EQ settings (plus Off). Each setting adds emphasis to a slightly different range of frequencies. EQ1, for example, adds a boost between 35 and 40 Hz, so you'll have a setting for music, another for movies, and one for all your Skype calls using your new Smart TV. Or you can just leave it in Off mode, which I preferred to use.

If you have a universal remote with learning capabilities, you can teach it the POR's IR codes, but there's also an external IR input on the back of the SC4000 to facilitate placement in a cabinet or beyond. Finally, there's a red LED





display hidden behind the grille cloth near the front, top-left corner. When you make adjustments, the display temporarily becomes visible through the cloth and indicates the value of the parameter.

One more thing: Definitive Technology is set to release a wireless upgrade kit consisting of a transmitter that connects to your AVR's subwoofer output and a receiver that inconspicuously docks (with no additional wires or power cords) into the back panel of the subwoofer. Extra receivers will be available separately for multisub installations.

Unfortunately, what often happens when an A/V manufacturer fattens up a product with features before driving it to the market, is that said company usually skimps on performance in order to hit the price point. So is the SuperCube 4000 the real woofin' deal, or is it more of a farting pig in a pretty party dress with layers of extra lipstick and cheap-hooker eyeliner smeared on? Based on the way things are typically done, a betting man would put a couple of bucks down on the flatulent, pimped-out farm animal.

But that betting man would wind up not being able to buy his morning, decaf, nonfat mocha-latte-chino because, as it turns out, there's nothing porcine about Definitive Technology's SuperCube 4000. On the contrary, this thing is one heck of a good subwoofer for the money. Now, don't think that means the little, 8-inch active and twin, 8-inch passives are going to play 20 Hz organ notes loud enough to crush your kidney stones. But it does mean Def Tech got at least half the name right when they used the word Super.

Bass Ship Blastoff

Whenever I have a subwoofer to try out, one of the first music discs I go to is S.M.V.'s *Thunder*. The

interestingly titled "Hillbillies on a Quiet Afternoon" is a pluck-fest of bass guitars that clearly showed the SC4000 is more than capable of handling transients beautifully without lagging or smearing. Likewise, the SC4000 was superb with Lucille and guest, Terrence Howard, performing the slower-moving "I Got Some Help I Don't Need" on the *B.B. King Live* Blu-ray Disc. The SC4000 added just the right amount of warmth to the bottom end without drawing attention to itself. While I only listened to the song for testing purposes, I was very impressed with the tightness the subwoofer showed with the over-the-top bass of Lady Gaga's "Bad Romance." Even though I know I shouldn't, I always have a tendency to think cinema first with subwoofers. But, the SC4000's tautness and smooth blending shows that Def Tech's engineers kept musical performance in the forefront of their minds.

Most speakers and subwoofers cringe in the corner when you bring out a copy of David Chesky's *Dr. Chesky's Magnificent, Fabulous, Absurd & Insane Musical 5.1 Surround Show*—and with good reason. The opening track, "Blast Off," contains close to 30 seconds of audio from a shuttle launch that's a true test of a sub's low-end muscle. Sure, the SC4000 wasn't able to pressurize and shake the room like a bigger, more capable subwoofer might have, but it held up impressively by playing loudly throughout the entire track without distorting or running out of gas (or, more accurately in the case of the space shuttle, liquid hydrogen and liquid oxygen). I'm guessing that's attributable in large part to the performance of the DSP compression/limiting circuitry. Another track the compact SC4000 did exceeding well with, especially for an under-\$800 subwoofer, was "Fire Drums." It did a fabulous job re-creating the powerful heft and weight of the drums without being boomy or overemphasizing any particular frequencies.

After handling music and rocket launches so well, it was no surprise that the SC4000 was perfectly at home with movies, too. In *Mimic*, the subwoofer in a home theater system has a big job,

HT Labs Measures

DEFINITIVE TECHNOLOGY SUPERCUBE 4000 SUBWOOFER

This graph shows the quasi-anechoic (employing close-miking of all woofers) frequency response of the

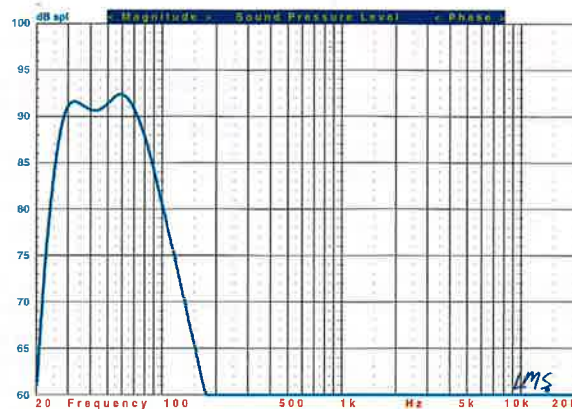
SuperCube 4000's subwoofer (blue trace).

The SuperCube's close-miked response, normalized to the level at 80 hertz, indicates that the lower -3 decibel point is at 26 Hz and the -6dB point is at 24 Hz. The upper -3dB point is at 94 Hz using the LFE input and the EQ control set to Off.—MJP

Visit our Website for a detailed explanation of our testing regimen, plus a list of our reference gear.

on the web

DEFINITIVE TECHNOLOGY SUPERCUBE 4000 SUBWOOFER



because the low-growling, flapping, and heavy-thumping impacts made by the giant, bioengineered bugs are all there is to compensate for the storyline. Of course, I don't really know what a 6-foot-tall, human-eating, flying insect would sound like when it takes to the wing and abducts a beautiful entomologist with a penchant for genetic engineering in the middle of a deserted subway stop, but I got a pretty good feel for it thanks to the SC4000. The flapping of wings and the smacking impact were taut, forceful, and—I've got to admit—pretty darn scary. Later, as the bugs' underground nest explodes (sorry to ruin the ending for you, but you knew that would happen), the thuds of falling manhole covers were also tight and contained.

A Package Deal

Considering all the extremely useful features the SuperCube 4000 has combined with its small size, exceptional musicality, and distortion-damping muscle, I think it's a spectacular bargain for under \$800. Definitive Technology has always had a habit of bringing together the right amount of performance with a knack for the perfect contemporary design in order to create affordable speakers that look as good as they sound (and vice versa). With the SuperCube 4000, the company's gone one step better and added a package of features that make this subwoofer a true standout.

Definitive Technology •

(800) 228-7148 • definitivetech.com
Dealer Locator Code DEF



SPECS

SuperCube 4000 Subwoofer
Enclosure Type: passive radiator Woofer (size in inches, type): 8, active; 8, planar passive (2) Rated Power (watts): 1200, RMS Connections: speaker-level, line-level (RCA) Crossover Bypass: LFE Available Finishes: Black Dimensions (W x H x D, inches): 11 x 11.9 x 12 Weight (pounds): 25 Price: \$799