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# HOME CINEMA

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## Choice

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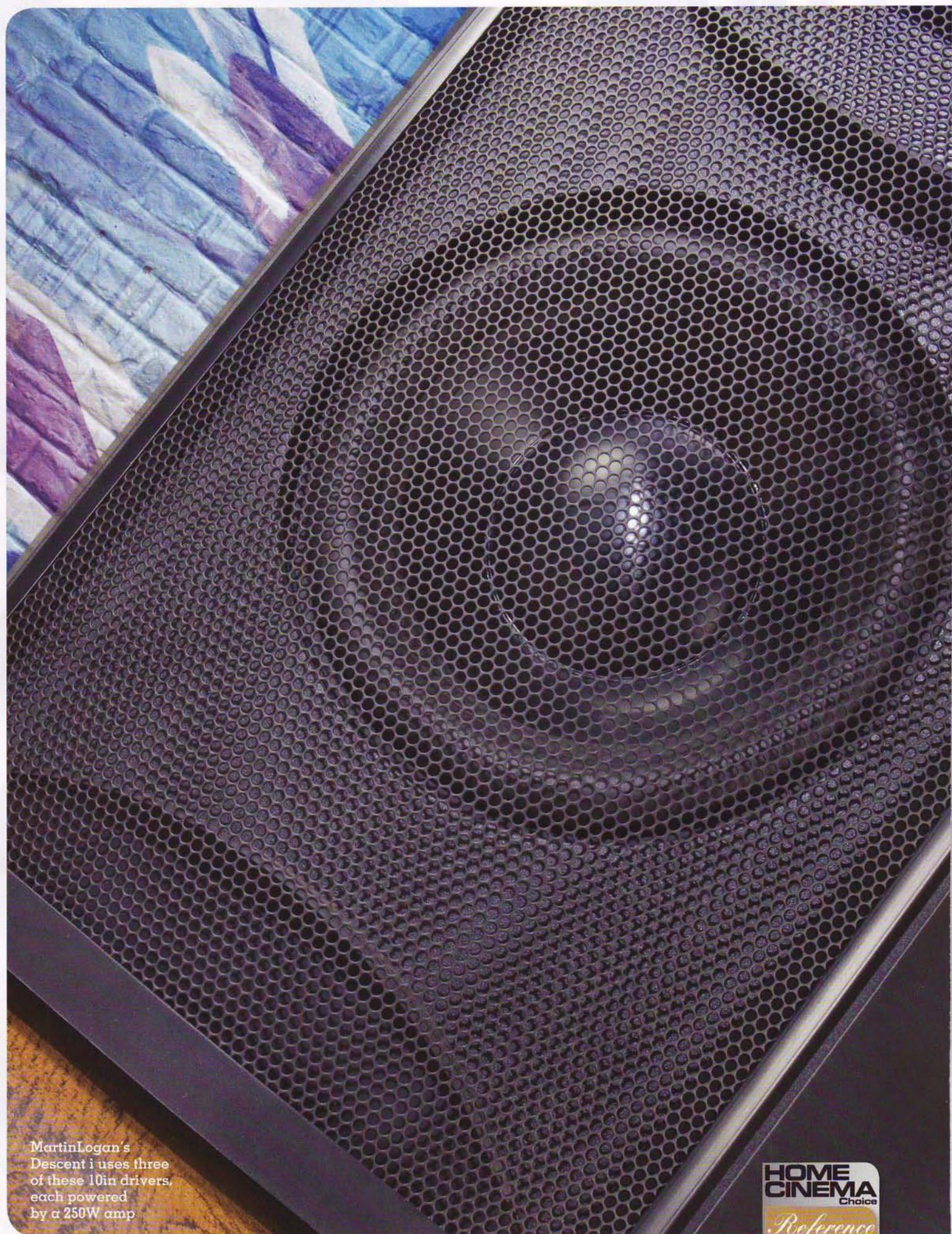


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techradar.com  
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MartinLogan's  
Descent i uses three  
of these 10in drivers,  
each powered  
by a 250W amp





# Taking bass to new lows

**Alvin Gold** auditions a premium-grade subwoofer which benefits from some serious engineering

**M**artinLogan's Descent i subwoofer looks very different from the norm, but its curious hexagonal styling isn't just for show. The shape arises because there are three bass drivers inside, each powered by its own 250W amplifier and spaced apart from its neighbour by precisely 120°. Why go to such trouble? According to MartinLogan, their reaction-force vectors will cancel each other out, thereby virtually eliminating cabinet resonance and vibration.

The sealed enclosure is strong, and there's none of the usual enclosure-moving-the-opposite-way as the drive unit cone does its thing. The arrangement has been used before by MartinLogan with the original Descent, which packed three 8in drivers. This model is larger, heavier and uses three 10in aluminium cone drivers, with a total radiating area almost equivalent to a single 18in driver. It would be almost impossible to get such a leviathan to work properly. This, then, is a statement subwoofer – the statement being that this is the way a subwoofer *should* be designed.

## Decision time

There are two very good reasons why the Descent i might be just the sub for you – and two to make the opposite case.

On the plus side, this is a peculiarly fine sub in any quality home cinema context. It goes deep, really deep, and seamlessly so. There are no shortcuts to setting up, but the sharp-acting active low-pass filters are well-designed and a good setup can be achieved without difficulty. An alternative would be to let the high-pass filtered subwoofer output

of your amplifier do the job for you. There are plenty of onboard options for fine-tuning.

The Descent i is also a superb tool for a music system; the control system makes explicit provision for stereo and multichannel setup with no manual switching required.

The reasons against it can be put very simply. The Descent i costs a lot of money – many will balk at its £3,000+ tag – though in its defence, that price is entirely in keeping with the engineering involved. Secondly, it is big and heavy. Of course, you can drape a small tablecloth over the top, and disguise it as a flowerpot stand – ideally not one filled of water.

In case the message hasn't been driven home, **this is a stunning subwoofer, almost without peers**. It is singularly free of any sound or colouration that can be identified with the design itself, and will blend with your host system beautifully. In this test it was paired with various speakers – floorstanders and compacts. In each case it handled the bass from the lowest limits, of which the main speakers were capable, down to the part of the audio band where you feel what is going on rather than hearing it directly.

Of course, one of the main effects was to add bass depth and stature to the sound, but this was only the start. The Descent i added to the sense of tonal colour and variety, smoothed the edges of the sound without reducing the sense of detail, and enhanced image scale, architecture and depth. Large-scale filmic effects in gung-ho flicks like *Kill Bill* came alive, even at volume levels where the basic subwoofer-free main speakers were beginning to show signs of distress. Seriously tasty! ●

## AV/CV

**Product:** Sealed box active subwoofer with three drive units in an internally balanced configuration

**Position:** Top-of-the-range flagship model, built as an enhanced version of the MartinLogan Descent

**Peers:** Mordaunt-Short Performance 9; B&W ASW825

## → Specifications

**Drive units:** 3 x 10in high excursion aluminium cone drivers

**Enclosure type:** sealed

**Frequency response:** 18Hz-120Hz, +/-3dB  
**Onboard power:** 3 x 250W continuous Vojtko switching (Class D) amplifiers (750W each total, 2100W peak output total)

**Dimensions:** 544(h) x 520(w) x 500(d)mm (without energy transfer spikes)

**Weight:** 47.7kg

**Connections:** LFE in (single ended & balanced XLR); L, R in (for use with receiver/amp low pass subwoofer output); speaker level in (4mm binding posts); mains power (IEC); Line level out (L, R); subwoofer out (for additional subwoofer)



## HCC VERDICT

MartinLogan Descent i  
£3,250 Approx

Price check: [www.techradar.com/532655](http://www.techradar.com/532655)

**Highs:** Technically an engineer's dream: fast; adds weight and colour to host system sound

**Lows:** Bulky and premium-priced; no automated setup

Performance: **1 2 3 4 5**

Design: **1 2 3 4 5**

Features: **1 2 3 4 5**

Overall: **1 2 3 4 5**