



JBLGTO 1204BP

MSRP: \$279.99
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For the past few years, JBL has been a powerful brand in car audio competition. In fact, Team JBL has dominated sound quality and SPL lanes, providing the company's engineers real-world feedback to help develop products that look great and perform beyond expectations. Following that trend is the JBL GTO 1204BP. As I removed the bandpass enclosure from its bright orange and white shipping box, it was hard not to notice its clean-cut cosmetics and above-average construction quality.

The back of the box angles to fit snugly against the backseat of most cars. Built from 3/4" MDF covered in black trunk liner carpet, the box has a faceplate made of 1/2" MDF flushed in and covered in stylish satin black laminate. A routed section in the left

accommodates a thick acrylic window allowing you to view the woofer's basket, while a white JBL logo centers in the middle of the laminate. Bass pumps through a rectangular slot port that is paint-

ed satin silver and rounded and flared at the edges to reduce port noise. JBL also added wedges or braces to all the corners of the enclosure to enhance its structural integrity. That's definitely a big plus.

The GTO 1204BP uses one of the company's newly designed 12" dual 2-ohm voice coil woofers from their Grand Touring series. It features a new basket design that makes it a full inch shorter than most 12" woofers on the market. To do this, the vented motor structure is pushed forward a bit. The sub also sports a hi-roll

rubber surround and the gratuitous vented pole-piece in the motor structure, all in the name of high excursion and power handling.

JBL included a manual that's a little thick for a normal sub box. I hoped it would be packed with the kind information that most customers need to know like how to handle the box or load it in order to get the best performance in their vehicle. Instead it includes installation tips (with a note on wearing eye protection), tells the user to disconnect the car's battery and other "helpful" information that has nothing to do with the enclosure. It also included a very generic illustration on how to connect the speaker wire to the terminal cup in nine different languages.

Upon inspection of the terminal cup I noticed that there was another set of terminals labeled 12 volts. I found nothing about this in the manual. I peered through the acrylic window and noticed four white LEDs tucked into the corners that would illuminate the inside of the box with a 12-volt supply. This is a nice feature for consumers who want to show off the box to their friends, but one that should have been included in the manual.

Double-checking the enclosure, I found another hidden feature on the sub. On the bottom, a removable panel is held in with 12 pan head screws. This is how you would access the woofer to service it.

INSTALLATION

Installing the GTO 1204BP was easy in the back of my Expedition. I disconnected my own sub enclosure powered by my reference amp that makes 2,200 watts at 4 ohms or 2 ohms. Since the GTO 1204BP is rated at 300 watts RMS and 1,200 watts peak, I connected my amp digital controller and dialed the amp back a bit. I connected 12-gauge speaker wire to the terminals and wired the box's LEDs to the switch-powered 12-volt outlet in the rear hatch of my SUV. JBL doesn't provide mounting brackets so I highly recommend having some fabricated to keep this jewel from sliding around.

LISTENING

Since JBL's tagline is "The Official Brand Of Live Music", I started my audition with a live track I'm very familiar with — Erykah Badu's "Ye Yo" from her album

Baduism Live. I thought the GTO 1204BP would have a chance to spread its wings on this and blend in with the rest of the system. Instead the box wanted to dominate the track. I had to dial back the sub level control on my head dial to make it blend in with the 7" midbass drivers in the front doors. The bass response had a big peak that made the track's kick drums sound overly boomy.

The next live track was Metallica's "Master of Puppets" from their album *S&M, Live with the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra*. This track was right on the money. The JBL sub blended with the midbass, the kick drum attack was strong and it easily played each note back-to-back and begged for more. I cranked the volume and the subwoofer reacted with ease, staying within its element while rocking the house.

I wanted to see if the GTO 1204BP would hang with the way most consumers would be (ab)using it, so I let the windows down and switched over to "Party like a Rock Star" by the Shop Boys. The song is a perfect blend of screaming guitar riffs, heavy bass notes and catchy hooks. The JBL sub's performance was clearly above average and made me want to throw the devil horns in the air and party like a rock star during the demo. The bass output was very substantial. There was enough boom to make the SUV move like an overweight man on a pogo stick.

The last track I used was "Chop Me Up" by Justin Timberlake. This track has a really low and aggressive bass line that plays below the GTO 1204BP's passband of 30Hz to 150Hz. The sub bottomed out, so I quickly rolled back the volume before I did any damage to the woofer's voice coils. Unfortunately, bandpass and ported boxes have sonic limitations placed on them by the nature of their designs so they don't always lend themselves well to every kind of music. With "Chop Me Up" the enclosure just didn't perform the way fans of the song would want it to be played.

CONCLUSION

So while the JBL has done a great job with the GTO 1204BP, proving itself to be solid performer with a flashy look and features, it did have that drawback. But its price tag of \$279.99 makes it a clear and easy choice when looking for an above-average bass upgrade for any system. For those looking for even more output the GTO 1204 BP has a big brother that features dual 12" subs for \$479.99.

SCORE CHART

Sound Quality	★★★★
Boom and Output	★★★★★
Installation	★★★★★
Overall Value	★★★★★

