



by Bruce Fordyce

FISHING FOR GOOD BASS

**The Bag End
Infasub-18
400-watt powered
subwoofer.**



Nothing in home theater audio can create a more positive impact than the addition of properly engineered, placed and adjusted powered subwoofer; on the flip-side, however, nothing can effectively ruin a surround sound experience quite as effectively as a bad subwoofer turned up to loud. Every friend I have who has embraced home surround sound has invited me over to listen to their new “boomin” system. When asked what I think, my response has always been the same: “The subwoofer is too loud!” No part of surround sound is as misunderstood by new home theater enthusiasts as the subwoofer, but while much of the sub’s poor perfor-

mance can be attributed to cheap drivers in poorly designed cabinets, the situation is almost always aggravated by the user cranking up the level to the point where the subwoofer overpowers as well as intrudes into the 5-channel domain to compensate for a system that drops off at the low-end. “I’m just getting my moneys worth!” seems to be the justification for this overlevel. Yet the end result is not a heightened “big movie” experience as much as heavy over-hyped bass, distorted sound stage, and a need for serious doses of prescription migraine medicine.

So what makes for a quality low-frequency home theater experience? A bass output level that compli-



Hot Products

ments (rather than overpowers) the rest of the sound system, a sound arrival time as close to the rest of the sound system as possible; a system that doesn't introduce color to the overall system; and a subwoofer that maintains relative power output through its operating frequency range.

It has been my experience that most powered subs are more trouble they're worth. What little excitement they add during those "blow everything up" scenes is negated by the overall blurring they add to the rest of the audio presentation. It would be nice to find a powered subwoofer that actually added to my home theater experience instead of compromising it. Enter the Bag End Infrasub-18.

It's What the Pros Use

A while back I was in a post-production shop doing some audio editing on a film of mine, when I noticed the studio employed Bag End subwoofers to reproduce bass frequencies in its playback studio. I asked why, and the response was "they produce the most accurate bass." That's a pretty good endorsement, and when I ran my own work through the 5-channel plus Bag End sub system, I was both impressed with the sub's performance and dismayed by how inaccurate my previous audio editing work was. Needless to say, once I reset my audio levels using the Bag End, the end result was a vastly improved audio presentation. After this experience, I was on the phone to Bag End to acquire one of these babies to review here in

AVI, everyone's favorite home theater magazine.

What became most evident when the Infrasub-18 showed up on my doorstep was its massive size and weight; weighing in at 92 pounds with a

21.25 x 18.25-inch footprint and a 23.5-inch height, this sealed 3-cubic foot beast is no small subwoofer system. What distinguishes this sub from many is its superior build quality, and the use of an 18-inch direct-radiating driver as opposed to a 12- or 15-inch one.

The system pushes its signals through an ELF (Extended Low Frequency) module, which is the "secret" weapon Bag End uses to create a system that "produces the most accurate bass." With a reported flat acoustical response down to 8Hz, the system is rated at 400 watts constant.

I read the White Paper on the ELF, twice, and basically came to the conclusion that there was no way to boil down how the ELF does what it does into anything remotely easy to digest. Essentially it claims to do away with the resonance and time-alignment problems inherent to standard low-pass filtering.

However, most people don't really care about the intricacies of filters or 12dB slopes or any other kind of esoteric crossover circuitry; they want something that sounds good.

Home Test

The Bag End Infrasub-18 doesn't sound good it sounds fantastic. It melded seamlessly into my 5-speaker array, providing the constant tight, authoritative bass reproduction reminiscent of the best Hollywood theater system I've heard. Where some subs seem to have an output bias as they increase in frequency, the Infrasub-18 seemed to be as powerful down low as it was toward its upper end. It didn't appear to suffer from the time-delay problems either, rather it acted as a logical and uniform extension of my fullrange speakers. When I demonstrated this to my "big bass turn it up too loud" friends, the reactions were nothing short of amazement. Now they all want one.

Sloppy bass is worse than no bass, but good bass adds dramatically to the overall home theater experience, and the Bag End Infrasub-18 is good bass at its best. Take it for a ride and you'll see what I mean.

Bag End, (847) 382-4550

SPECIFICATIONS

Cabinet: 3/4-inch MDF

Amplifier Output Power:

400 watts continuous sine wave

ELF Module: Patented 8Hz

dual integrator

Finish: Black-matte vinyl laminate,

oak, maple, walnut, rosewood

Dimensions: 23.5 inches high X

21.25 wide x 18.25 deep

Weight: 92 lbs (41.7kg)

System Type: 3 cubic foot sealed

Drive Nominal Impedance: 4 ohms

Input Connectors: left, center, right

RCA channel line-level; left and right

channel speaker spring terminals

High-pass Filter Outputs: left,

center, right line level RCA jacks;

12dB per octave, factory set for -6dB

@ 95Hz

Frequency Response: +/- 3dB from

8 to 95Hz, ELF system -6dB

frequency 95Hz

Overload Protection: preset

threshold concealment circuitry

Price: black-matte finish, \$1,495;

wood finish, \$2,795 and up