

bag end TA6000-I/ Infrasub-18 surround system

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by
bobby
owsinski



It may look like it belongs in an auditorium, but Bag End's surround system fits well in a studio or home theater.

When I first received the Bag End TA6000-I/Infrasub-18 surround system, I thought they sent me the wrong system. You see, this system has a very industrial design that looks to be more at home in a church or auditorium than in a home theater or recording studio. But a quick call to Bag End revealed that I had received the correct system, and that many of the high-end home theater installers were in fact using this system in some very pricey installs. So after rounding up some amplifiers to power the system, (Hafler) I headed to the studio with an open mind.

The Specs

The TA6000-I is an unpowered, two-way system featuring dual 6.5-inch cone woofers coupled with a 1-inch compression-style biradial horn crossed over at 2.1 kHz, and sports true Time Alignment (what most consider a generic term, but is actually trademarked by E.M. Long Associates). The 27 lb. cabinet is made from 15mm 11-ply birch plywood covered with a black textured lacquer and measures 22.5 inches high by 9 inches wide by 11 inches deep, but has the unusual design (for a monitor) of a trapezoidal 10-degree taper per side. The grille is made from 16-gauge black vinyl coated perforated steel and the input connector is a Cinch screw terminal barrier strip. The unit also features a number of built-in rigging points designed for a variety of mounting hardware. The unit's impedance is a nominal 8 ohms, and has a relatively high sensitivity of 95 dB SPL

at 1 watt at 1 meter with a power handling capacity of 150 watts continuous sine wave and 600 watts instantaneous peak.

The Infrasub-18 is certainly one of the most impressive-looking subwoofers that we've seen just in sheer size. With an 18-inch woofer powered by a 400-watt (continuous sine wave) amplifier, the unit has a response from 8 Hz (!!) to 95 Hz \pm 3 dB, according to the manufacturer. Bag End states that this low-frequency extension is the result of their ELF (Extended Low Frequency) circuitry, which eliminates the need for a low-pass filter and results in smoother frequency response, phase response, and Time-Alignment. The enclosure, which is made of 3/4-inch MDF, measures 23.5 inches by 21.25 inches by 18.25 inches and weighs 90.5 lbs. The input connectors are RCA jacks for left, center, and right channels, with high-pass filter outputs (12 dB/oct, -6dB at 95 Hz) for left, center, and right on RCA jacks as well. The Infrasub-18 has a built-in protection circuit (which Bag End calls a Concealment circuit) that protects the unit from overload by reducing the lowest frequencies to their maximum safe level while not affecting the bass content above the frequency that exceeded the threshold. Concealment is present to 3dB below the amplifier overload point and is not adjustable. The system also has a polarity switch to adjust for the smoothest transition at crossover.

There's really no manual with either unit, just a single sheet that gives some specs, basic theory, and a brief operating guide. Almost all of the really important setup information is printed on the back panel of the Infrasub, however.

In Use

This system is surprising in that it doesn't sound the way it looks. With

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the industrial "live sound/contractor" styling, I expected the system to have sound designed to penetrate large groups of people. That is, a narrowly focused, harsh midrange usually associated with a horn. But the system didn't sound like that at all, instead having much more of a "hi-fi" sound than anticipated. In fact, I quite enjoyed listening back to some DVDs in a home theater context, and had no trouble using the system during both tracking and overdubbing. Because of the tightness of the dispersion pattern of the horn, I found a little bit of a hole when panning a source out to the sides between the front and the rear, but this is a common complaint that I have with most direct radiators that can be easily overcome with careful placement.

As a recording studio system, I found the TA6000-I/Infrasub-18 to be more accurate response-wise than any other systems that I've used in the past. But, with RCA inputs, the barrier strips, and unpowered monitors, it seems better suited to a permanent install rather than one that must be frequently set up and torn down, as are most near and mid-field surround systems these days. That being said, most traditional systems suffer from the center speaker's positioning

against a video monitor, but this is where the system shines, since a TA6000-I can easily be configured for a low-profile center channel speaker. Also, this is one system where you must use a bass manager in order to gain a full range of playback frequencies since the TA6000-I's have a low-end cutoff of 95 Hz (which is the upper extreme of the Infrasub-18). However, the transition between the two is very smooth and seamless, with no noticeable hole in the response, as frequently is the case.

The Bottom Line

All in all, I found the TA6000-I/Infrasub-18 system surprisingly easy to listen to and I wouldn't feel uncomfortable using it for most studio applications. Despite my reservations about the system if it has to travel frequently (strictly from a set-up time perspective), it would make an excellent choice for a permanent install like a home theater.

CONTACT:

Bag End

Tel: 847-382-4550;

Web: www.bagend.com.