

TAPE OP

The Creative Music Recording Magazine

SHOOTER JENNINGS

Marilyn Manson, Tanya Tucker, Brandi Carlile

LOU HOLTZMAN

NYC's EastSide Sound

MARC URSELLI

Hal Willner, John Zorn, Lou Reed, U2

BEN KANE

Emily King, D'Angelo, PJ Morton

DENISE BARBARITA

MONOLisa Studios, kid's Music, NYC

HEBA KADRY

Björk, mastering, mixing in NYC

JESSE LAUTER

Tedeschi Trucks, Elvis Perkins, music docs

SCOTT JACOBY

Jason Mraz, Vampire Weekend, John Legend

LOGAN FARMER

Recording his solo album Still No Mother

GEAR REVIEWS

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Carl Tatz Design

ICE Cube-12 subwoofer

Did you know it's possible to spend \$4000 on a 12-inch powered subwoofer? Wait, no, that's not what I'm reviewing here! While writing this review I ended up scanning Sweetwater and found a similarly-spec'd subwoofer for four times the price of the *ICE Cube-12*. Now that we've put this in perspective... In *Tape Op* #82, I reviewed Carl Tatz's PhantomFocus System after running around Nashville with Carl and visiting various rooms he'd set up. PhantomFocus is less of a "product" and more of a way to set up and treat control rooms; one that generates a very clear and impressive image in the listening position. The *ICE Cube-12* is meant to be used in mono pairs in a PhantomFocus System and never muted out of the monitoring scheme. Being that Carl designed this sub as part of a whole system, I bet it works quite well in his rooms. But here at Jackpot! Recording I have a pretty much randomly designed and treated control room and had recently discovered the subwoofer I'd used for 15 years was falling apart. So, here I am once again, using gear as it was not intended. The funny thing is, it works perfectly well in this scenario.

My large main monitors are ATC SCM25A Pro [*Tape Op* #101]; the result of 23 years of searching for speakers that made sense to me. I have dreams of getting the larger SCM45A, and I may someday, but the main reason would be to gain that little bit of low end extension from the extra driver and a larger cabinet. So why not add a subwoofer instead? Well, I had always had a miserable time with subwoofers. Like the time I spent days mixing in an unfamiliar studio only to find the sub had been on the entire time (with no indication whatsoever). Or dealing with the crappy sub that I owned previously that never sounded quite right.

The *ICE Cube-12* is a nice looking shiny 16-inch cube-shaped 12-inch subwoofer with wonderfully simple controls and features, powered by Bang & Olufsen's recent ICE Power amplifier technology. There are rubber or metal cone feet, the metal working well on my carpeted floor. Inputs are a mono XLR or a pair of RCA jacks for consumer gear. The minimal controls include a Low Pass Filter, Volume, and Phase (polarity adjust). Since I use a Dangerous Monitor ST [#60] my subwoofer feed is stereo. To begin, I simply plugged the

left channel sub feed into the *ICE Cube-12* input, and I have to admit it worked fine like that. I begged Hamptone to set up a simple resistor network (a breadboard with 1 k resistors later showed up!) to combine the L/R sends in case there is panned low end material, but on the tracking and mix work I do I am extremely careful with low end information and always have it summed to center. I ran a 50 Hz sine wave at moderate volume, and tried the two different polarities, quickly finding that reversed was best in my room (Carl recommends firing towards the wall in front of the listening position; I set up the other way). I then soloed the sub while playing a louder rock mix I was working on and set the Low Pass Filter to mostly boost the low end of the kick drum (around 85 Hz) and not so much the bass lines. After a few volume adjustments, I came upon a setting (around 1/3 volume output using just the left input) that allowed the *ICE Cube-12* to fill in the bottom end that my ATC's were missing but without making the mix boomy or allowing the room to get too excited/energized.

I worked on mixes for several weeks with this setup and was pleasantly surprised. No one asked me to turn down the bass guitar; an issue that had been occurring a bit recently (yeah, I'm a bass player). I had the subwoofer engaged far more than I ever have in the past while mixing, which was a total surprise to me. I also listened to several HD albums and Tidal streaming tracks (Hi-Fi or Master) and focused on low end reproduction. The *ICE Cube-12* made an improvement in all cases, and the simple, moderate setting I calibrated worked perfectly. I know I pulled this unit out of its "comfort zone," and Carl was reticent about my not using it in his PhantomFocus System (which I *do* want to hear in his dual front corner positioning), but I will tell you, for the price and the quality I think this subwoofer is a deal, and it's changed the way I view subs in general. (\$999, carltatzdesign.com) -LC

72/Tape Op#139/Gear Reviews/