

Imaging the bass

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Image's new smaller sub By Michael Jones

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Image AVS100.2 active subwoofer. \$1600

With the growing interest in subwoofers these days, it makes sense to ask the question: What makes a good subwoofer?

The answer you'll get will depend partially on who you ask. For example, some people will point to the production of huge amounts of rolling low frequencies from explosions in an action movies. Others will say that a good subwoofer is not noticed, until some low bass is produces. And even then it merely sounds as if the main speakers are producing that extra bass extension.



The Image AVS100.2 subwoofer next to the Image 402 speaker

I tend towards the latter view. To me there's nothing worse than the indistinct rumbling and tuneless bass from many subwoofers. That doesn't mean that I don't like or appreciate low bass. I do, but the bass should contribute to the musical performance or movie atmosphere, rather than merely rearrange the furniture.

A good subwoofer should match the description: to fill in below the woofer in the main speakers (sub = below; therefore below the woofer).

So is the Image AVS100.2 a good subwoofer? You bet.

Description

The AVS100.2 and the bigger 200.2 subwoofers are very closely related. A driver sourced from Peerless is used, with a 250mm (10 inch) driver in the AVS100. This driver is manufactured from air dried wood-free pulp, ie



paper, a material often used for low frequency drive units.



The driver boasts large voice coils, double magnet assemblies and long excursion capabilities. This makes for a good start with a subwoofer, as there's nothing like good engineering to produce low bass.

The cabinet is not huge by subwoofer standards, being 465mm wide, 460mm high and 340mm deep. As normal with Image loudspeakers, the AVS100.2 is available in a number of beautifully finished real wood veneers. The driver is on a long side of the cabinet, behind a grill cloth.

My use of the Image AVS100.2 was with my Epos ES14 loudspeakers, mainly driven from my Plinius 8150 amplifier. I used the speaker level inputs of the AVS100. I also used the AVS100.2 with my Denon 2801 AV receiver, this time using the subwoofer out connection on the Denon via an appropriate cable into the RCA inputs on the back of the Image. With the Denon I sent both the LFE track and low frequencies from all channels to the sub.

Music first. I loved the difference that the Image made to my system. Although my Epos speakers go down to 40Hz or so in my room, they don't do so with a great deal of power or authority. The Image fixed that.

Any subwoofer can produce bass, of course. But a lot of subs merely seem to grumble along with everything, adding their own very obvious signature to the music. The Image subwoofer was nothing like this. It's response was quick and unobtrusive, powerful yet delicate. One of the best things you can say about a subwoofer is that you don't notice its presence - until some low bass comes along.

The Image made a big difference to the scale and "size" of music in my room - all kinds of music. For example, the Image made the bass guitar in Bob Marley's *Natty Dread* more authoritative and meaningful, while also doing the same to the orchestra in Zander's wonderful performance of Mahler's *Symphony #5* on Telarc.

One thing that the Image didn't do, which the twice-the-price **REL Storm 3** did very well, was in the area of space. The REL gave me a much better sense of recorded space.

The rise in sales of subwoofers in recent years has largely been due to

the rise in home theatre. Many movie soundtrack feature copious amounts of bass and many home theatre enthusiasts want to hear and feel every bit of it.

Although the AVS100.2 is not a large subwoofer, it can produce copious amounts of bass. An example is on *Star Wars The Phantom Menace*, where the soundtrack is the only good thing about the movie.

During the pod race the low frequencies are at a very high level (fortunately, LucasFilms had the sense of putting the worst of this in the LFE track, so as to not blow up systems without subwoofers!).

The Image AVS100 could produce copious amounts of low frequencies when required by this DVD. And even though the driver was working at pretty much its peak excursion, there was no sign of distress from the woofer. Excellent stuff!

As you can tell, I'm very happy with the performance of the Image AVS100 subwoofer. It does what every subwoofer should do - produce bass - and do so in a way that adds to the musical performance.



Perhaps the best thing I can say about the AVS100.2 is that I greatly missed it when it left. Highly recommended.

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