

Earthquake Nova Sub-120

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AN EARTH-MOVING SUBWOOFER



For home theater as well as music, nothing beats a subwoofer for creating deep submersive bass and low frequency effects. Without subwoofers, movies like *The Day After Tomorrow* and *Saving Private Ryan* would be

missing a large amount of their impact. I believe nearly half of the full home theater experience is audio, and the subwoofer plays an important part, especially for crating the explosions and blasts that action movie fans have come to expect. However, a subwoofer is a lot more than just a boom machine (or at least it should be). Most speakers can't replicate the lowest notes found in music. That's where a subwoofer also shows its stuff.

That said, it's surprising how many people don't use them, or settle for underpowered subs. Most home theater speaker systems come with subwoofers, though many of them barely qualify for the title. We got a hold of a new sub from Earthquake, the Nova Sub-120, to see how it holds up as an upgrade for the under-performing subs that too many people are stuck with.

Earthquake is all about subs. That's all they sell, in fact some of them are downright frightening. At an industry tradeshow, the company demonstrates its products by sticking girls on top of their subs while the bass action makes them...um, jiggle. The company's mammoth SuperNova sub can be heard throughout the large Las Vegas Convention Center stand too close and the vibes will make you feel nauseous. Luckily I didn't have to try one of those in my house.

The Nova Sub-120 is an extension of the Nova line which started with the Sub-80. The Novas were designed to complement smaller rooms with either medium-sized tower speakers or home theater-in-a-box systems. The Novas are smaller than Earthquake's main lines, though most the kind that use satellite speakers. These aren't small subs though. The Sub-120 is more than 17-inches high and 18-inches deep and weighs 36 pounds. The 300 watt built-in amplifier drives a 12-inch woofer. You can connect it to your system with either line level or

speaker level connections. On the back there's a phase switch, 40Hz TO 160Hz crossover control, volume, auto power switch and an on/off toggle for the blue Nova light on the front. It comes in either black or silver.

I connected the sub to a B&K 507 receiver via a Monster Y sub cable. I used a very long stretch of cable because with a sub, you'll want to move it around a bit in order to determine where it sounds best. As with regular speakers, a sub won't sound quite the same in all rooms, and subs can perform differently in different locations. Positioning

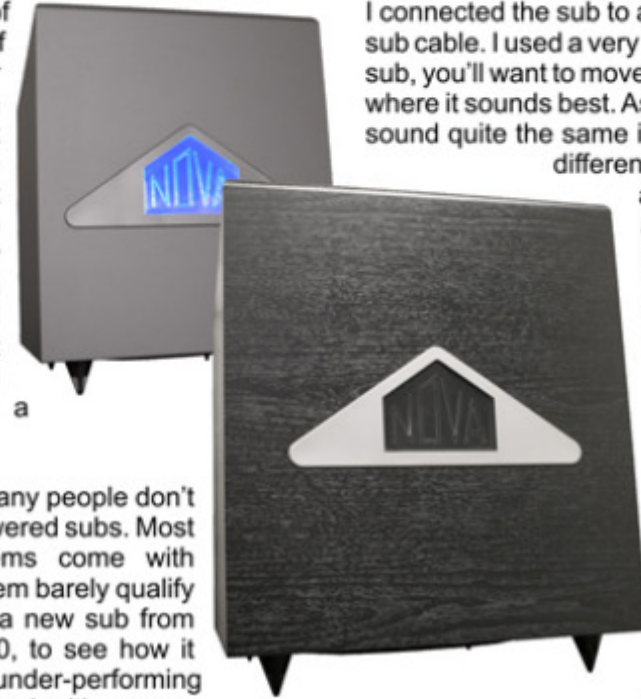
a sub in a corner will generally amplify the volume, but often diminish the accuracy, resulting in a dull rumble rather than tight bass. Carrying around the 36 pound Nova was a chore, but I found a position where it worked best and wasn't an eyesore.

I started out listening to a live Zappa recording that's got the best kick drum for checking out subwoofer performance. With the Nova, I felt the kick right in my chest. The sound was tight, not boomy. Likewise with the Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture when the kettle drums make their

canon fire appearance, my walls shook as if they were really feeling the barrage. When listening to a Yo Yo Ma/Edgar Meyer CD, the deep bass sounded musical, not muddy, which happens with weaker subs. Movie soundtracks also sounded good. In the Tom Cruise film *War of the Worlds*, the scene when the aliens first break through the ground has one of the loudest bass tracks I've heard, and the Nova really made itself felt during that scene. Another day, my family and some friends watched *The Polar Express*, and the scene when the train pulls onto the boy's front yard is another bass buster. Again the Nova's impact was deep and thunderous without being cloudy.

Good bass is something that is difficult to appreciate until you've heard it done right. Far too many people settle for subwoofers that make every bass note sound like a growling stomach. If you're unsatisfied with the sub in your system, give one of these a try.

-Grant Clauser



Earthquake Nova Sub-12

\$799

300 watt amplifier

12-inch woofer

40-160Hz adjustable crossover

0-180 phase switch

20-180Hz frequency response

88.5dB sensitivity

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