



## PACKAGED PERFORMANCE

### Infinity Modulus Speaker System

Complete home theater speaker system in a box... The very words strike fear in the hearts of strong equipment reviewers. Having been sonically abused by a dozen such systems, I instinctively braced myself for a fatiguing couple of weeks, so it was a pleasant surprise when the Infinity Modulus box arrived and was decidedly heavy. Not because manhandling massive cartons about the place is my idea of fun, but because the

thin plastic speaker boxes that I imagined I would find inside would have weighed very little. When it comes to HI-FI speakers, weight is our friend. With a minimum of grunting and groaning, the Infinity's were welcomed and made to feel at home.

My review set was finished in charcoal, the darker of the two color schemes available. The other, platinum, is said to blend-in by picking up highlights of the other colors in the room. Those



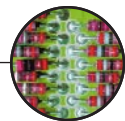
who have visited my listening room would almost certainly suggest that not highlighting the colors of this particular environment may be preferable, and I would likely concur. My listening room has a high-tech look with its dozen or more bits of audio and video gear arrayed on black wire racks, so the Modulus speakers blended right in.

The Modulus left, right, and the surround pair are a quartet of curvaceous little numbers, each

containing a 4-inch woofer and 1-inch dome tweeter. Much heavier than they look, they feel rather solid, passing the knuckle test with flying colors. They have a built-in mounting foot, which rotates courtesy of a clever ball-joint, to become a wall-mounting bracket. This splendid idea is made possible by the unusual sculpted shape of the enclosure. Although the footprint is small, the speakers were quite stable, even around my 12-pound cat. I hung the rear speakers from the ceiling just behind my listening position (sofa) and varied their contribution to the overall sound-field by turning them outwards, tilting them upwards, etc.

Although the center channel system has a different profile, it contains a couple of the same 4-inch woofers, together with a single 0.75-inch tweeter, a similarity which gave it a fair fighting





chance of sounding like its smaller siblings. My set-up places more demands on the center channel than any other, so the double woofer arrangement gave me the output level that I needed and wanted, while remaining inconspicuous, both visually and sonically.

The one part of the Modulus system that was most conventional was the subwoofer, although it too held some surprises. The subwoofer was a dark gray box, standing on four tuna-can styled feet. It sports a 12-inch driver on one side, with the familiar black amplifier and connectors motif adorning the other end. Exiting beneath the enclosure is a flared port tube, which cleverly reduces the breathing noises that ported subwoofers usually make when they are working hard. Powered by a 300-watt RMS (600-watt peak) amplifier, this is somewhat more powerful than we typically see on a 12-inch subwoofer on a system such



as this. This beefy bass amplifier employs BASH technology, not as one might suspect, an implication of the body-blows it can deliver, but actually a rather clever power supply design that minimizes the amplifier's size and allows it to run cooler than a conventional type.

Unusually, the subwoofer also includes a single band parametric equalizer, which the marketing folks have termed RABOS, for Room Adaptive Bass Optimization System. Also in the Modulus package is a hand-held sound level meter and test CD, and the manual has a wonderfully clear yet detailed explanation of how these are used to fine tune the subwoofer to be as smooth as the rest of the system. Interestingly, the subwoofer, the 4-inch drivers and the tweeters all employ the same raw material for their cone/dome, called Ceramic Metal Matrix Diaphragm (CMMD), although the material in the subwoofer is about 20 times thicker than the tweeter dome material. Infinity claims this material has the ideal balance of properties for such use.

While the sub also has speaker level inputs, I hooked it up via the RCA sockets, and set about tuning it to my room. After 15 minutes of rumbling noises,

and a hundred trips between the sofa and the sub, I had a very smooth response, and it was ready. Initial listening revealed that the RABOS system made it smooth, but it took a couple more sofa-to-sub trips to get the perfect level balance between the Modulus satellites and their bass station. It's good to know our ears have not yet been declared unnecessary. Although I found it an excellent feature, I shan't dwell on the RABOS set-up, because it is only necessary to do it once, unless you move the subwoofer to another spot and, even then, the second set-up takes far less fiddling than the first.

Those who know me, know that I am only a casual sports fan, but I must confess that I found Formula 1 racing, through a particularly natural sounding system (especially with good bass extension) absolutely riveting. The wail of the cars as they pass, the hiss of the tires, and that heart-massaging exhaust boom, put me into sensory overload. I was enjoying it so much, that I got to share the experience with several neighbors, who I suspect really came over wondering what all the noise was about. An afternoon of socialization like this inevitably turns into several subsequent evenings spent watching their favorite DVD movies at my place. ("Boy, this sure puts my system to shame. Is it really all coming out of those tiny little things?") It is worthy of note that one of my visitors is vigorously imploring me to hook him up with my Infinity contact, so he can buy them when my time with them is done.

The small size of the Modulus speakers aided me in placing them in acoustically appropriate spots, so their stereo image was both broad and deep, giving me a listening sweet-spot considerably larger than my 3-section sofa. Being able to move from one end of the sofa to the other while maintaining a stable stereo perspective was something of a novelty for me. The overall sonic effect was materially enhanced by the flexibility of the mounting brackets on the rear pair, which helped in blending them into a very believable rear ambience.

My initial misgivings about plastic box speakers were completely assuaged by the diminutive Modulus system, which demonstrated far better performance than I expected. I noticed a crisp yet not aggressive high-end, a clean, smooth midrange and a solid and serious bottom-end. Critical listening to difficult material revealed some wandering of the stereo image, particularly when the action was towards the left end of the piano keyboard. The woofers in the Modulus satellites are highly capable, bless their hearts, but they are four-inch drivers, so it was no surprise that there was a finite limit to their output ability. This is a tough test, and I have at least a couple of pairs of speakers that are far larger that cannot do any better.

For those who do not listen to piano solos at live performance levels, the Infinity Modulus system has an excellent tonal balance, good dynamics, and the cosmetics to blend almost invisibly into almost any room. Fans of Chippendale furniture should probably look elsewhere, but fans of Chippendale dancers will appreciate their well-balanced sound and small size. ♦

*Infinity Systems Inc. 250 Crossways Park Drive, Woodbury, NY 11797  
(800) 553-3332 <http://www.infinitysystems.com> ~Price \$1699.*