
Rythmik Audio F8 Reviews

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Home Theater Shack



Introduction

The subject of this review is the Rythmik Audio F8 subwoofer. The F8 is an acoustic suspension design utilizing dual 8" drivers in a front-firing configuration. Each driver is coupled to its own 300 watt RMS class D Hypex Ucd amplifier featuring Rythmik's patented servo control mechanism. Quoted frequency response is 18Hz-250Hz, with the -3dB point @ 20Hz.

Everything is contained in a rather tidy cabinet measuring just 20"x11.25"x14" (HWD in the vertical position, including grill). Due to the slender profile the F8 actually looks smaller than those dimensions imply when seen in person. It's a solid little beast nonetheless, weighing in at a somewhat surprising 66 lbs. For this review Rythmik sent me two units, one finished in high gloss black paint while the other was covered in black oak veneer. Even with both units stacked on top of each other horizontally the combination was not the least bit obtrusive.

Ordering

Rythmik Audio is a quintessential ID (Internet Direct) company - selling their wares directly to the public - but with one minor exception; they do offer several products through Ascend Acoustics. That one deviation notwithstanding, the vast majority of sales originate from their own website.

Rythmik sells the F8 with three different finish options. The F8-SE, which has a gorgeous high gloss black paint, retails for \$949. You can also get it with black oak veneer (F8-BO) or a matte black finish (F8-BM), both selling for \$849. No matter which you opt for shipping cost is the same; free in the continental US. Rythmik has just recently upped their in-home trial period to 45 days, so you can effectively test drive the F8 for a month and a half before deciding if it's right for you. Warranty on this model is the same as the rest of their line; electronics get a health 3 years - also recently increased from 2 years - while the driver is covered for 5 years.

Unboxing

Something tells me Rythmik knows how brutal most shipping companies are and has preempted them by taking the necessary steps to ensure your subwoofer arrives intact. The F8's were not only double boxed, but each of those boxes was double thickness. They also cradled each unit in 2" thick custom formed medium density foam that covered the entire top and bottom of the box, creating a protective cocoon of sorts. The bottom piece of foam has cutouts specifically designed so your hands can slip underneath the sub, making it far easier to remove. For someone who doesn't unbox a lot of units that may seem trivial but for those of us who do it frequently little touches such as that are very welcome indeed. It shows someone is paying attention to the details, no matter how minor they may be.

The top piece of foam had separate spots for two small boxes, one held the power cord while the other had five 1"x1" rubber feet. There are only four threaded inserts in the cabinet though, so it seems Rythmik threw in an extra (not sure if that's standard practice or someone miscounted). Frequently included with subwoofers that have high gloss paint are a set of white cloth gloves, none of which have ever fit my largish hands unfortunately. Rythmik tossed in a pair as well, and these were no exception; they were too small for me so I couldn't use them, but it was another nice touch that contributed to a positive first impression.

The SE model is wrapped in a thin sheet of plastic, like the type used in the kitchen for food prep. It's then placed into a cloth drawstring bag. The units with oak veneer and matte paint don't have the plastic wrap or drawstring bag, but instead come in the more typical thick plastic bag. Regardless of the packaging, when taken as a whole the presentation was excellent. This is not a budget subwoofer so it's fitting Rythmik went to great lengths in order to let the buyer know they're getting something special.

Impressions

Long time readers of my reviews know I like themes. I don't always find one but every so often I'm fortunate enough to encounter a unit that creates its own, some commonality which repeats itself over and over again and becomes impossible to ignore. It's quite evident when that occurs because the thread tying everything together is conspicuous as I translate my notes into what you're reading now, the published review. I really enjoy those moments, even though sometimes it can be frustrating because the words often flow from my brain faster than my fingers are able to transcribe them. In spite of that it's always gratifying when things connect all by themselves. For the Rythmik F8 the theme became apparent early on, and that was 'more than it appears'. In essence, everything about this subwoofer was more than it appeared.

Physical size and driver compliment indicate something relatively uninspiring, yet it was anything but. While room shaking bass was not to be found - and how could it be otherwise with 8" drivers? - exquisite sound was in abundance. Throughout my time with this pair of diminutive subwoofers I found myself almost constantly amazed with the precision and detail the F8 provides. I've reviewed the LV12R, have heard an FV15HP - and even owned an E15HP myself - so I have grown accustomed to how Rythmik does things. Despite the absence of sub-20Hz content, something I'm quite fond of mind you, I still found myself smitten with the F8's. This is the little subwoofer that could, no doubt about it. If you're a "basshead", a person who lusts after pulverizing levels of output, the F8 is probably not for you. However, for the discriminating individual who has no desire to macerate their innards Rythmik has your subwoofer.

Note that you don't have to completely abandon really deep bass to own an F8 because you can use one as an MBM (Mid-Bass Module), something that bridges the gap between a larger subwoofer and your speakers. Rythmik actually has another variation of the F8, called the FM8, specifically designed to be used in that manner. MBM's are a great way to reinforce an octave or two, say between 30-60Hz or 30Hz-120Hz. From what my ears heard the F8/FM8 would be perfect for the task.

The 'more than it appears' theme extends to the weight which proved to be heavier than I anticipated given the size. It looks rather small by conventional subwoofer standards, yet pick it up and you're likely to think "whoa, that weighs more than I thought it would". The cabinet itself is rock solid, eliciting a dull thud should you try the knuckle rap test. With the aforementioned options of high gloss paint, oak veneer and matte finish the F8 should be able to satisfy any room decor (read: WAF).

In typical Rythmik fashion the included documentation was a simple one page instruction sheet briefly describing what each switch, knob and dial on the amp does. For the experienced user it's adequate, but there should be more detail for those who aren't familiar with the terminology. Considering this amp has settings and options few others do it would be worth expanding the provided information somewhat.

Most of the common controls are present and accounted for, with virtually no surprises to be found among them. The volume knob has 3 distinct indicators; Min, Max and a dot for the midway point. Not ideal, but workable. Personally I like to see more detail, numbers from 1-10 for example. There are soft detents for each individual setting point, providing a tactile indication to go with the visual one. The phase dial is similar in its markings with just 3 positions; 0 and 180 degrees, along with a dot for the midway point of 90 degrees. That's not as much of a concern as the volume knob because those three settings are perhaps the most common. The crossover is a bit more puzzling though.

There are markings for 50Hz, 100Hz, 150Hz and 200Hz. 50Hz increments - so it's easy to see the pattern they were going for - but do you notice something conspicuously absent? What about 80Hz, the industry standard and by far the most common setting? There's ample space for the lettering on the back plate, so that one left me scratching my head.

One of the primary reasons I hope Rythmik expands their documentation is due to the additional configurations they provide that almost no one else does. The F8 has two such options. The first is a switch for the LPF (Low Pass Filter), which in its simplest definition is something that provides an additional 'slope' - or frequency rolloff - at the crossover point between the subwoofer and speakers. Each 6dB rating is referred to as an "order", so a 6dB slope is First Order, 12dB is Second Order, 18dB is Third Order and so on. Rythmik gives you two settings, 12dB and 24dB (second and fourth order, respectively). The higher the number the faster/steeper the rolloff is, meaning the subwoofer produces less audible artifacts in the crossover region. The reasons behind this setting are many but according to their documentation Rythmik suggests 12dB for HT usage and 24dB for music. I left it at 12dB for this review, which encompassed both HT and music, and it seemed to work fine for both.

The other unique configuration is a Bass Extension switch which tailors a 'rumble' filter that determines how low the F8 will play. The three settings are Low Music, Low HT and High. Low Music will allow the F8 to play deep bass below 20Hz, but the total output capability is lessened due to the amp and driver working harder to produce those very low frequencies. Low HT sets the rumble filter for 20Hz - so the really deep stuff is bypassed - but then you get additional headroom as the trade off. High sets the rumble filter at 28Hz. That limits the deep bass rather substantially, but in return you can really crank up the volume.

I'll bet some of you read the previous paragraph and thought "why does the Music setting allow for deeper bass than the HT setting?". It does seem contradictory, doesn't it? Music rarely goes below 20Hz, yet movies almost always have some content that low. Why are the Low Music and Low HT settings seemingly reversed? Good question, and the answer is simple; Rythmik is protecting you from damaging anything. Because music rarely goes below 20Hz there's little possibility you'll overdrive the F8, so they figure why not let all that content come through unfiltered. Movies are a different story though; not only is there significant content in the 10Hz-20Hz octave, there are also large dynamic swings to contend with. Given the amount of deep bass in the majority of movie soundtracks, and the volume most people play them at, it is far more likely you'll push a subwoofer with 8" drivers into doing something bad in that scenario (read on for a real-life example of exactly that).

The amp proved a bit reluctant to wake up from standby. The volume required was more than I generally use for day-to-day listening, and it also tended to go into standby mode when listening at low volume levels or when the content didn't contain a lot of bass activity (like watching a car race or basketball game, something I do frequently). I was able to mitigate that by leaving the amp in the On position, so thankfully it wasn't such a big deal for me. There was some warmth when the amp was left on, but it wasn't a lot. According to Rythmik the amp goes back to sleep after 45 minutes of inactivity, but I know it happened to me quicker. I never timed it though so I can't say definitively how long it actually took.

Another area of the HX580 amp I'm not especially thrilled with is the fact Rythmik chose to use a mini-XLR

connector for input. I've never encountered one of those previously, even though I've reviewed over 3 dozen subwoofers and have owned/seen who knows how many others along the way. I'm not certain why they choose to do that either because the amp has more than adequate room to accommodate a full sized XLR plug. Even with my plethora of cables and adapters I didn't have anything like that so I had to resort to using the unbalanced (RCA) input.

The 8" driver Rythmik uses can really only be described thusly; overbuilt. Holding one of these things in your hand reveals absolute heft. It's constructed using a six spoke cast aluminum powder coated frame, a 5.75"x2" motor assembly with vented voice coil, rigid paper cone and medium density foam surround. For those keeping track, the 5.75" diameter of the motor assembly means it's approximately 70% of the driver itself!

The cabinet construction shows the same degree of excess. Built entirely from 1" MDF means it's already rigid, but Rythmik didn't stop there. Bisecting the interior is a window brace of 1" MDF. That brace is then split into two halves - making an individual chamber for each driver - by a solid perpendicular brace made from... you guessed it, 1" MDF. Lining every single surface is a sheet of 1" acrylic damping material glued firmly in place. Add it all up and that explains why the knuckle rap test sounded like I was hitting a piece of granite, because it's almost as inert.

Rythmik stepped up their game when it came to the F8 grills as well. All three models use a frame that's 1" thick. In the case of the SE it's a composite material with a finish practically identical to the gloss paint, while on the BO and BM models they went with black painted MDF. The SE grill has half a dozen small football shaped rubber pieces glued to the inside of the frame to keep it from rattling against the cabinet. Regardless of frame material each was stiff, not flexing at all.

The material used on the SE model has a luster that blends perfectly with the gloss paint of the cabinet. The BO and BM models? The fabric chosen for those two is flat black, impeccably matching the appearance of their respective finish. A direct comparison between the F8-SE and F8-BO revealed that the SE material was more transparent than the BO. Probably not an issue when it comes to sound quality or total output, but when compared side-to-side it was noticeable. In all cases the grill is held snugly in place by plastic pins in each of the 4 corners. And when I say "snugly" I do mean snugly; unless you have long fingernails, which I don't, you'll need some type of tool to get the grills off. When they're on, they're on.

Listening

My living room is 13x17x8 (1768 ft³), so it's not terribly large. The main seating position was approximately 11 feet from the subwoofers. The evaluation was done after the units had been broken in for at least 25 hours.

Sound quality has never been an issue with any Rythmik subwoofer I've heard previously, and the F8 was no different. Clarity, precision and detail were all spot on, and the overall sense was of a warm sound. The output level I could achieve caught me a bit off guard; with a pair of F8's at my disposal I was able to crank up the volume higher than anticipated, yet in spite of that there was still enough left in the tank to ensure good dynamics.

As some of you already know, I own a multitude of bookshelf speakers. They're all different, each chosen to fill a particular need. This allows me to match any type and size of subwoofer I'm likely to encounter with a speaker that will compliment it. Since music is where the F8's really shine I mated them with my Avantone MixCubes. Using a single full-range 4" driver, these passive speakers were designed specifically for studio mastering. The F8 excels at music, the MixCube was intended for it, so the pairing seemed logical enough. Crossover point was 100Hz, high for me but done on purpose. Rythmik rates the F8 up to an incredible 250Hz, so I figured why not test that. Let's hope my sensitivity to 'chesty' voices doesn't rear its ugly head though.

Movies

Under normal circumstances I choose test material almost exclusively with an eye toward punishing the review unit - worst case scenario, as it were - but in this instance that didn't seem fitting. Using nothing more than a pair of 8" drivers in a sealed enclosure means the Rythmik F8 is not targeted toward people who want to puree their pancreas with waves of bass. Instead, this one caters to those whose needs are decidedly less audacious. As such the movies I opted for this time are not bonafide members of the "bass-fest" club, but ones selected to represent the target audience for the F8. That might strike some as apostasy, but it's not the case; my intention was to be realistic and work within the F8's design parameters. Right tool for the job, so to speak. Have you ever seen a car magazine tow a boat while testing a Ferrari? Of course not, so why drag out all the 5 star bass movies to test a subwoofer that wasn't designed to reproduce that content? I did want to push the F8 to a certain degree though, so Tron was included in the mix.

Joe Satriani, Live In San Francisco (DVD)

First up was a live concert. Despite the fact this disc is a DVD - and circa 2001 at that - it has an unexpectedly good audio track. It was recorded at the legendary Fillmore West in San Francisco. Joe was using his familiar rhythm section consisting of Stu Hamm on bass, Jeff Campitelli on drums and Eric Caudieux playing both guitar and keyboard. This is Satriani's penultimate lineup, and it just so happens to be the group I'm most familiar with.

Joe is renown for adhering to the studio version of his songs when he plays live so rarely will you hear an extended rendition of anything. That isn't necessarily a bad thing because there are few guitarists walking this earth as talented and fluid as this man is. Around the turn of the 20th century Joe began working with Ibanez to produce a signature guitar, a very unique piece where the body was coated in liquid chrome. Yes, it was dipped in molten metal! Sadly it never became a production guitar - it simply couldn't be manufactured reliably - but Joe used the prototype on this tour. It was very interesting to see, no doubt about it.

I ended up listening to most of disc 2 during this evaluation. The first tune I queued up was a particular favorite of mine, House Full Of Bullets. This one has a driving rhythm with a bluesy feel, the kind of song you inevitably find yourself bobbing your head to. In typical Satriani fashion this is an instrumental piece with no vocals. The F8's produced excellent clarity, with both the bass guitar and drums being distinct yet blended at the same time. The 'gut punch' from a true live show was absent, but that's to be expected when you're dealing with 8" drivers. The detail was amazing though, something I was reveling in.

Crystal Planet was next, which is the title track from Joe's 7th studio album. Released in 1998 this is a high energy song, right up my alley. Stu Hamm's bass was very pronounced with a nice overall sound. The recording deemphasized Eric Caudieux's guitar, making this one sound more like a true 3 piece band, so that meant Jeff Campitelli's drums needed to be prominent in order to fill out the rhythm section. Thankfully the F8's were up to the task.

I finished off with Big Bad Moon, one of the rare songs were Satriani actually sings. This one is almost a combination of the previous two; a blues song, but with an up-tempo rhythm. Hamm's bass guitar and Campitelli's kick drum played off each other better here than they did during Crystal Planet, something I definitely enjoyed. The F8's treated me to a lively rendition of this song.

Blood Diamond (blu-ray)

Leonardo DiCaprio plays a South African named Danny Archer, an ex-mercenary who decides to switch careers and become a diamond smuggler instead. Most of his stones come from Sierra Leone, a country that just so happens to be in the middle of a brutal civil war (the story is set in the late 1990's). DiCaprio is often considered to be nothing more than a pretty boy actor, but that wasn't the case in this movie. He has a gritty role here and I personally think he pulls it off rather convincingly.

At first I wasn't quite sure which scenes might be an appropriate test for the F8's, so I just started the movie from the very beginning with the intent of taking notes when applicable. Under normal circumstances I'm pretty disciplined and restrict myself to just the sections I'm going to write about, but as the movie continued I found myself too engrossed to shut it off so I ended up watching the whole thing. At least I was disciplined enough to take notes during a few scenes, with one in particular standing out.

While in prison for his smuggling escapades Danny overhears a conversation between a fisherman named Solomon Vandy and an RUF (Revolutionary United Forces) soldier who goes by the name Captain Poison - some things you just can't make up - about an extremely valuable find. Just weeks earlier Solomon was captured by these same rebels and forced to work in one of their diamond mining operations. While gathering stones one day he unearths a huge pink diamond, a rare and priceless find. He attempts to hide it for himself but Captain Poison catches him in the act. However, before the rebel leader can steal the stone from Solomon government troops descend upon the mining operation and capture everyone. That's how Captain Poison and Solomon end up in the same jail as Danny.

By the time Danny finally confronts Solomon about the stone they're out of prison and in a place called Freetown, a fairly civilized environment given the alternatives. Just as their conversation is heating up the RUF come storming into town looking to wreak havoc. A counter-offensive is immediately launched by government forces, but unfortunately both men are caught right in the middle of the chaos. Danny, being a mercenary by trade, has a weapon and knows how to use it, so he spirits Solomon away while machine gun fire crackles all around them. The F8's played their part very well, delivering the requisite level of depth and impact to make the scene enjoyable. The RUF also have IED's (Improvised Explosive Devices) and Molotov cocktails at their disposal, while the government forces counter those with RPG's (Rocket Propelled Grenades). All of those elements create a very manic and frenzied scene, yet the F8's never flinched. Each component remained distinct in sound and character, regardless of how frantic things got.

TRON (blu-ray)

What can you say about this movie other than it's a feast for the eyes and ears. The visuals are stunning, effortlessly drawing you right into a bizarre alternate world. The audio track can be brutal however, from both a depth and sound quality perspective, but that's why it is such a staple in subwoofer reviews. It's also partially why I couldn't help myself from choosing it as the lone punishing soundtrack. With the F8's I heard subtle nuances that were not evident with most of the other subwoofers I've evaluated, a testament to Rythmik's lithe and agile drivers being governed by the servo system. By contrast, this is also the movie where I pushed it beyond its comfort zone.

Anyone who has seen this flick is very familiar with The Grid scene. The deep undertones from the Daft Punk soundtrack create an ominous sensation. Couple that with the mayhem and carnage from the action on the Grid itself and you end up with quite a workout for your subwoofer. With that in mind it shouldn't come as a surprise to hear this movie will sometimes confuse a limiter or the DSP programming. Apparently that's what happened here.

As the Lightcycle battle draws to its inevitable conclusion there are but two combatants remaining, CLU (Codified Likeness Utility) and Sam Flynn. Driving headlong at each other on their cycles - essentially playing a futuristic version of 'chicken' - they collide, at which point Sam's Lightcycle is catapulted into the invisible protective barrier that encircles the Grid. Upon impact his cycle explodes and it's at this very moment I heard an odd sound. On familiar soundtracks such as this my ears are particularly attuned, so I knew instantly something wasn't right. Since I had the Bass Extension switch set for Low Music (which produces the deepest bass) I speculated perhaps I had over-driven the subs, so I changed both to Low HT and played the scene again. The noise occurred in the same spot though, indicating to me that perhaps something else was afoot.

I won't bore you further with how I went about troubleshooting the issue, but after several iterations of turning on/off the subs individually, and flipping switches in various patterns, I was able to pinpoint the issue to a single F8. The other unit never made any unexpected sounds, even when pushed to the extreme in the Low Music setting. Rythmik immediately sent a replacement unit, but it acted the same as the one I returned. A subsequent conversation I had with Brian Ding led to the realization Rythmik would have to make a slight adjustment to the limiter. By the time you read this that will have already occurred, so going forward it's highly unlikely anyone else will encounter what I did.

On a side note... this is the third time a manufacturer had to adjust amp tuning because I've pushed their subwoofer beyond its limit while doing my review. Realistically it would be next to impossible for anyone else to have found what I did - in this case or with the two previous units - because you would have to be hammering on it with the same force I was. Not a very likely scenario to be honest. My point is there wasn't anything inherently wrong with any of the three units, only that an adjustment needed to be made in order to ensure nothing untoward occurred during extreme situations. Maybe I should hire myself out to companies who really want to put their products through the ringer, eh?

After all the testing had concluded I checked the amp to see how hot it had gotten, but there's little for me to report here. While I did find some heat, it was negligible at best. From what I can tell the drivers and amps are well suited to each other.

Music

This is where the F8 subwoofers really started to come into their own. Brian Ding, the architect behind Rythmik, is a music fanatic. He and I are kindred spirits in that regard. It should come as no surprise then that I spent a considerable amount of the time listening to music. Hours and hours were dedicated to various genres. Everything from Fiona Apple to Disturbed, I played it all. The Rythmik F8's proved to be a faithful companion throughout.

Boom Boom, Out Go The Lights (live) - Pat Travers (CD)

I've seen Pat Travers perform live 4 or 5 times in my life, and even during his down years I loved those shows. From the highs he had in the mid 70's through the mid 80's, to the lows he experienced well into the 2000's, I have always enjoyed watching this man perform his craft. Although drugs and alcohol took something from him for too many years - sound familiar? - he ultimately bounced back with a vengeance. Kudos to the person who fights off his demons and eventually prevails.

This song is a cover of a Little Walter tune and represents Pat Travers during his heyday, the pinnacle of his musical career. It's a time I remember fondly too, so listening to this song transported me back to my youth in short order. For the type of music I enjoy this particular quartet represents a very rare confluence of talent, a group of musicians that all too infrequently comes together. When they do it's magic (no pun intended, seeing as how Pat Travers released an album titled "Makin' Magic"). Travers was the headliner, of course, but this band also featured Peter "Mars" Cowling (The Syndicate) on bass, Pat Thrall (Deep Purple, Asia, Meat Loaf, Cream, Joe Satriani) on guitar and the incomparable Tommy Aldridge (Ozzy Osbourne, Gary Moore, Whitesnake, Ted Nugent, Thin Lizzy) on drums. I was fortunate enough to see this exact lineup twice so I can personally attest to their musical prowess. Those were two concerts I won't soon forget.

Boom Boom, Out Go The Lights is featured on Pat's 1979 album Go For What You Know. Produced by none other than Tom Allom - the person behind the controls on the first 5 Black Sabbath albums! - this whole project had an undeniable pedigree from the word go. Despite that the mix tends to be a bit thin, lacking the guttural

bass which is a hallmark of most live shows, but it is a seminal album for the category nonetheless. Having heard this song at least a hundred times means nothing can escape my scrutiny, and as it turned out the Rythmik F8's were up to the task and made for a delightful experience. Tommy Aldridge is widely regarded as a pioneer in the use of double bass drums, yet no matter how fast his feet hit those pedals the F8's seemed wholly unfazed. Mars Cowling was giving it everything he had as well, but in spite of their efforts neither was able to rattle the F8's. Try as they might these subwoofers held their ground and never faltered, producing this up-tempo rhythm with ease.

Tony McAlpine - Pyrokinesis (CD)

Tony McAlpine is a gifted musician, a person who can play multiple instruments better than most of us have ever mastered any single one of them. Try as I might I was never able to get beyond average when it came to the guitar, yet this guy can play it like few others can. Throw in the fact he's equally accomplished with the bass and keyboards and I'm not certain if I should envy or detest him. At the end of the day I suppose it's the former; my passion for music, and Tony's singular talents, ultimately make me forget my own inabilities.

Pyrokinesis is a corybantic song underpinned by a kick drum that seems almost unreal, to the point where you begin to wonder if anyone is really capable of moving their feet that rapidly. Unrelenting and machine gun like in pace during long stretches, Marco Minnemann throws all caution to the wind and lays down a drum rhythm few others could. For those who do not enjoy this type of music it can seem as though your senses are being assaulted, and with this song in particular I can certainly understand the sentiment. But it is precisely this type of over-the-top beat that made it ideal to test the F8's, or so I thought anyway.

Although I selected a song that should have brought these subwoofers to their knees what ultimately happened was something completely different. In short I found the F8's weren't really fazed by the chaotic pace, never missing a beat despite the blistering source material. You could almost hear them saying "is that all you got?".

Joe Bonamassa - Live At Red Rocks (Streaming)

Those who have read my past reviews know I'm a Joe Bonamassa fan and a live music junkie, so what could be better than a JB concert? Going to one of his shows at Red Rocks would certainly qualify! Seeing a live performance at Red Rocks is on my Bucket List. It's an outdoor amphitheater close to Denver, and supposedly it has phenomenal acoustics (along with being in spectacular natural surroundings). While channel surfing one evening I came upon something that stopped me dead in my tracks; Joe Bonamassa, live, Red Rocks. Think this one made it to my DVR?

The concert was broadcast on Palladia in Dolby Digital, so I got treated to an audio track in full 5.1 surround sound. Joe was doing a tribute to Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf, and for a true blues fan those names need no introduction. Just like every current rock band can trace their roots to the music of Led Zeppelin and Black Sabbath, every blues artist has a connection to Muddy and Howlin' Wolf. For this particular concert Joe was not using his usual rhythm section, but instead had a 10 piece ensemble complete with horns, piano and harmonica. That took some time for me to get used to, because I love the sound of a 3 piece power trio, but just a few songs in and I was hooked. Unfortunately I neglected to take notes about individual songs, mostly because I was enjoying myself too much, but I did jot down some thoughts.

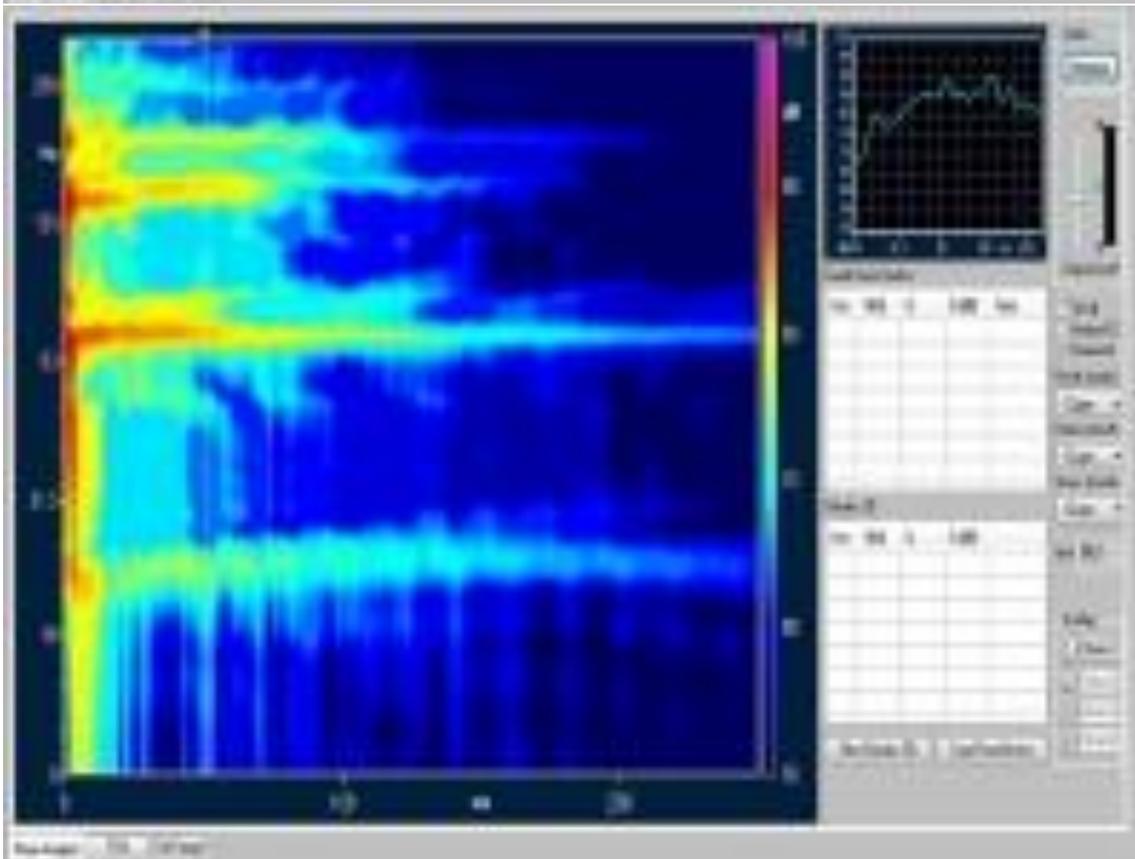
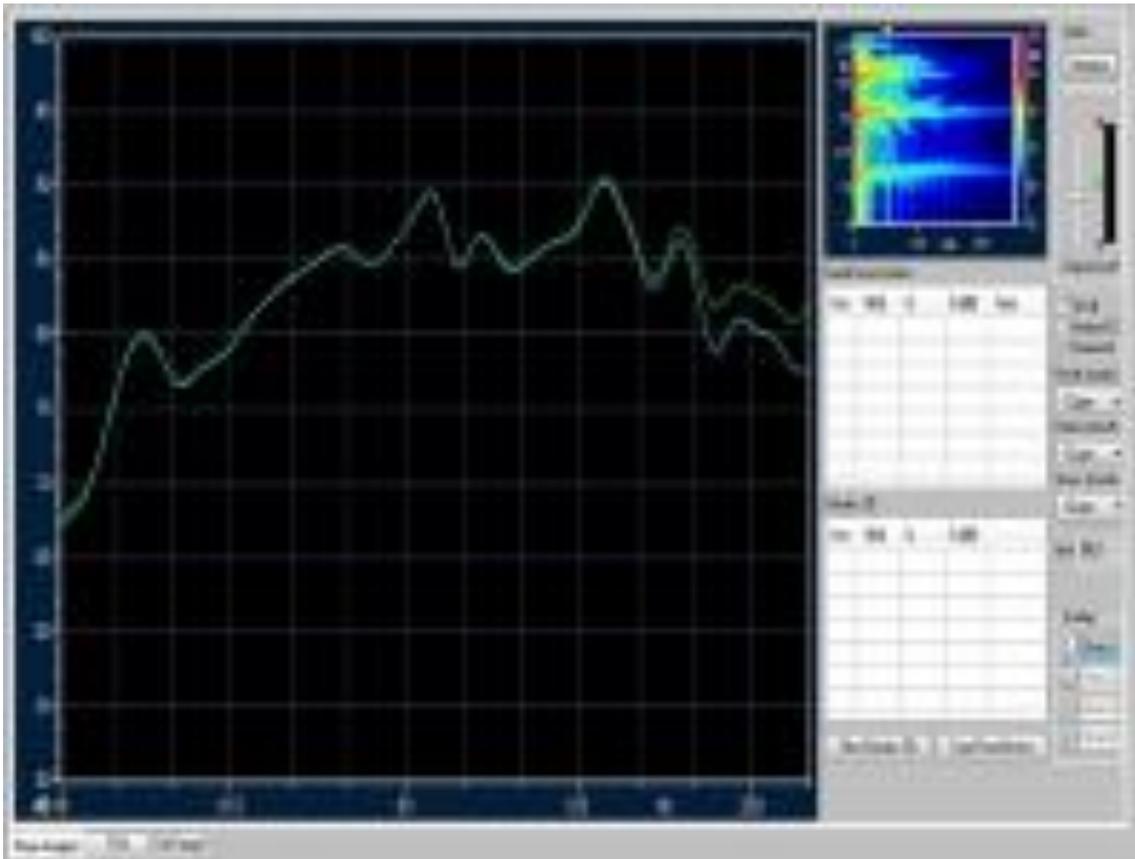
The bass from the F8's came through cleanly and with purpose. It didn't have the presence of an actual concert - which is one of my favorite parts when seeing live music, the gut punch from the PA system - but it was far cleaner and more precise than you're likely to find in the typical venue. No matter how complex or intricate the rhythm section became everything was present and accounted for, with these subwoofers never falling behind or losing pace. Volume wasn't an issue either; I had portions of this show turned up really loud, yet the presentation was always engaging with crisp and detailed bass. Complex and busy soundtracks do not present a problem for these subs.





These measurements were taken using XTZ Room Analyzer II Pro. The unit was indoors, physically positioned in the center of my listening room. The sub was laying on its side with the microphone 1 foot from the driver in sealed mode and 1 foot from an equidistant junction of both ports and the driver when in bass reflex mode. Gain was at 12:00, phase 0 degree's, Q Control 0.5 and crossover disabled. Please disregard the bump at 23Hz in the frequency response charts and spectrographs. I've identified a potential issue with the microphone which is most likely causing it. The native response of the subwoofer does not exhibit that tendency.

This represents the frequency response when the Bass Extension switch is set to High. The green line is with the LPF switch set for 12dB, while the blue line is when the setting is at 24dB.



This represents the frequency response when the Bass Extension switch is set to Low HT. The green line is with the LPF switch set for 12dB, while the blue line is when the setting is at 24dB.

This represents the frequency response when the Bass Extension switch is set to Low Music. The green line is with the LPF switch set for 12dB, while the blue line is when the setting is at 24dB.

