

Inside Nashville's Ivy Hall Studios With Engineer Eric Loomis

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HANDY HARDWARE

Amphon FlexBase25

From the petite One12 to the double-tall Two18, we have reviewed every studio monitor and amplifier from Finland's Amphon, except the BaseOne25 and BaseTwo25 low-end extension speakers. Half speaker, half speaker stand, these models were designed to literally live under one of the company's monitors, adding dual/stereo low end extension. I have heard them in action at various trade shows; they work well, but require a very specific room/monitor setup that my space simply cannot accommodate.

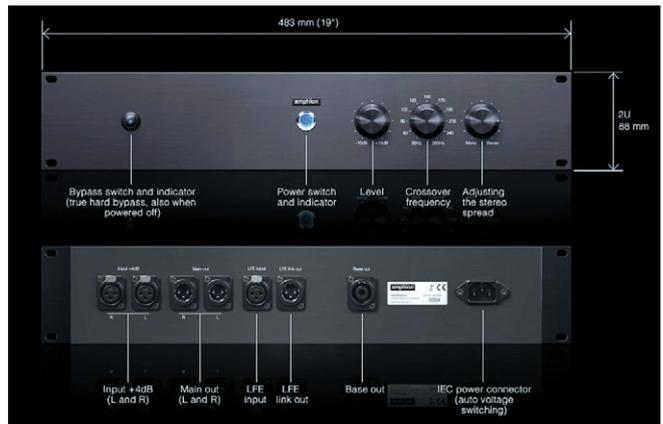
The FlexBase25 is Amphon's latest bass extension system. According to Amphon it's not a standard subwoofer, but it does consist of a single unit designed to live between your monitors, and can be mono, stereo, or even a bit wider.

The big box

The FlexBase25 is a 110 lb. monolithic box that measures 33" high, 12 1/4" wide, and 13 1/2" deep. On the left and right sides of the cabinet, about 2/3 of the way up, are a pair of 10" aluminum drivers, similar to the rest of the Amphon line. It is a sealed-cabinet design with no venting, radiators, or bass ports, and features an active 4th-order crossover.

The FlexBase25 is capable of 117dB maximum SPL, with frequency responses of 20–260Hz ±3dB (lowpass) and 35 Hz–200 kHz ±3dB (high pass). Also on the FlexBase25 is a single input jack that connects via Neutrik speakON cable to the Amphon FlexAmp, which is the brains of the operation as well as a 600W (300W x2) RMS @ 4Ω power amp.

Like a subwoofer setup (I know, not a subwoofer), the FlexBase25 system lives inline between your interface outputs and the inputs of your speakers, connected via Left/Right XLR I/O. The FlexAmp connects to the FlexBase25 with the aforementioned speakON cable and there is also a set of XLR LFE I/O for linking units, as well as direct LFE connection.



The front panel has buttons for power and bypass, which takes the FlexBase25 out of the system and returns your main monitors to full range. When it's active, a crossover knob lets you select the crossover point from a generous range of 35Hz–260Hz. A second knob allows you to tweak the unit's volume level ±10dB. Used in tandem, these first two controls let you determine the proper blend and level of your desired low end.

The FlexBase receives a full stereo signal over that single 4-conductor speakON cable, and the last dial on the FlexAmp lets you decide how wide this stereo image should be. Thanks to the coincident stereo design of the FlexBase25, with both speakers facing out to the sides, you can choose if the signal is stereo, mono, or pushed a touch beyond the usual stereo image, according to your needs/tastes.

In use

Unlike a traditional "set it and forget it" subwoofer install, part of the "flex" in FlexBase25 comes from its interactive design. I would suggest mounting/placing the FlexAmp in a position where it can be tweaked as your needs dictate.

While the FlexBase25 is not a traditional subwoofer, it can act as one if desired. Set it to mono, focus the crossover around 80Hz and below, and crank it up. It will boom and thoom and shake your room, or as a recent client exclaimed: "Wow, that thing kicks!"

I primarily set the FlexBase25 to be a sonically integrated extension of my One18/Amp100 setup. For mixing most styles of music, I prefer bass extension that you do not necessarily notice until you bypass the unit and find it missing. This is a perfect place to note that while it's designed to be best used within arms' reach, there's also a remote footswitch option available to by-pass the FlexBase25 for quick A-B comparisons.

Conclusion

I have done a number of mixes with the FlexBase25 as part of my system, again set to a moderately noticeable stereo setup, and I have been very pleased with the results. Amphon in general is not a low-cost option, and the FlexBase25 is not inexpensive: it's more of an investment in your studio's sound.

An odd bit of praise is that most of the time I forget that the FlexBase25 is there. I never feel like my bass is overcooked; it does its job and stays out of the way, adding just the low end I need to nail my mixes. Living up to its name, the FlexBase 25 makes my already-beloved Amphon setup even more flexible. —PV

Price: \$4750

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