

Bag End Subs in Hit Factory Studios

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The Hit Factory (now Hit Factory Criteria Miami) is a legendary recording studio with a long history of producing major recordings for leading artists and groups. The list of those recording at Hit Factory locations in New York and now in Miami have ranged from John Lennon, Paul McCartney and Paul Simon to Beyonce' and Lil Wayne. Bag End subwoofers are now helping the studio adapt its studio capabilities to bring true reproduction to both the wide variety of music genres and clients the studio serves, but especially to the demands of today's urban music. As music styles and the artists/customers of the studio veered more towards the urban genre with low frequency program material, Chief Operating Officer Bob Lanier felt it was important to assess the sub situations in the studio's rooms to ensure the studio could continue to meet its clientele's desire for more bottom end and a "club sound". Hit Factory then commissioned Walters-Storyk Design Group to calibrate/tune each of the individual studios and make recommendations where changes were needed.

"The expertise of John Storyk and WSDG is legendary, Lanier says. "We wanted the most exhausting assessment of our studios, and we knew they would give us that."

"We found that the Hit Factory technicians had done a terrific job of maintaining the studio sound quality," says WSDG Senior Engineer Dave Kotch, "But as we tuned and calibrated each room, we found that there was one particular room where the bass was lacking and needed to be reworked." The room was one that had been making Platinum records since 1983, but as Hit Factory evolved to meet the demands of its clients, it recognized the need to adapt and incorporate new technology to better meet those needs.

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Kotch points out that the one of the biggest challenges in installing subs into a studio is maintaining proper time-alignment and room position of the sub.

"That is a bit of a special art that WSDG has become very good at, and that was one of the reasons we were brought in to this project. When subs are not in the correct room position or have incorrect delay times at the crossover between the subs and low-frequency drivers, the effects are much more catastrophic."

The recommendation of Storyk and Kotch after their assessment was to replace the existing subwoofer in that studio. They evaluated a number of subs from leading manufacturers, and Bob Lanier, Trevor Fletcher, VP and general manager of Hit Factory, and Simon Soong, head of the technical department tested several themselves. The Hit Factory's final decision, based on WSDG's recommendation, was to choose the new IPD18E-I subwoofer made by Bag End.

"The studio had to have subwoofers that could meet the needs of a variety of music styles, including today's urban music that demands a lot of the low end," says Kotch, "and we also had a very small install space to work with in the control room.

We weren't willing to sacrifice one requirement for the other, and Bag End was the only sub that fit the bill completely."

"One of the unique aspects of our particular situation is that we do so many different styles of music," says Fletcher, "we can't afford to have a room categorized only as a "Hip-Hop" room. It has to sound great across a variety of genres whether it's Shakira one day or Lil Wayne the next."

"Obviously," says Simon Soong, head of the technical department, "the ability of the subs to handle the abuse of lots of extremely heavy bass and still deliver accurate sound was paramount, and Bag End won in that department hands down. But these Bag End subwoofers are also very compact, and fit into our available space. And the IPD18E-I subwoofer is self-powered, which made the installation much easier for me."

"It also wasn't just a matter of the volume or absence of low end," says Fletcher, "but the true characteristics of the low end as well—which is one of the most important results artists are looking for. Bag End met that need for us."

He also points out that, in addition to sheer space considerations, the layout of the studio control room was also a challenge that the Bag End sub was able to meet.

"Because of the proximity of the console to the front window, for example, the other subs we looked at would have had to be installed on their sides to fit, which would have nullified the full range of benefits we were looking for from the subwoofer. The ability to get the exact footprint we needed—and consequently the right sound—was extremely helpful."

Both Fletcher and Soong also were impressed by Bag End's willingness to create a solution that would work.

"From the very beginning," says Fletcher, "Bag End's president and co-owner Jim Wischmeyer said, 'We're here to solve your problem; if this sub doesn't work for your specific application, we will build you one that will. That level of dedication and customer service was invaluable."

Soong performed the installation of the new sub. According to Bob Lanier, many clients have used that studio since the installation, and all have expressed positive feedback. Several have commented specifically that the subs not only handle the low-end volume without distortion, but also deliver the characteristics of the low-end sound that they are especially looking for.

