Infinity Servo-Statik I

[Source: FR purchased; Price: $2,095; Units tested: Screens, 6249; Bass Amp, 401C. Note: The speakers are discontinued.]

The Servo-Statik I (by Infinity) is one of several good speakers to appear on the market in the last seven years. The Dayton-Wright, Dahlquist and Magneplanar, along with the Servos, provide very real challenges to the old standard, the KLH 9.

Finished in either rosewood or walnut, the SSI system consists of two screens (28 x 37 x 6½ inches), a single bass commode (22 x 22 x 19 inches), and a bass amplifier. The bass amplifier unit houses a self-contained crossover, providing external output to drive the separate midrange and tweeter amplifiers. The bass amplifier itself is a monaural unit, fed from combined left and right signals.

Although the SSI will no doubt sound good under most conditions, HP and I have found that certain rules should be followed when setting up the Servos. First and foremost, the screens should be off the floor at least 18 inches and away from the wall about 3 to 4 feet. Second, the bass commode should be located behind the screens and to one side. Third, the driving amplifiers for the midrange and treble must be exceedingly clean, as this is most important to the over-all smoothness of the SSI system. (I use a Dual 75, 16-ohm tap on the mids and a Dual 75, 6-ohm tap on the top.)

The extended bass response of the SSI, 14 Hz to 120 Hz, is certainly one of its most controversial features. Rock fans will love the bass, but in a small room the acoustic output of the bass cube may be just too much.

In a larger room, however, the bass smooths out and I can hear the advantage of a good sub-bass response. On "live" recordings and on organ recordings one can hear the awesome realism the Servo bass extracts from the recordings. No, my cube does not hop around the room.(HP: It is not a very clean bass.)

The midrange screens, 100 Hz to 2,200 Hz are supposed to blend with the woofer at the low end and the tweeter at the high end, without any dips or peaks. There is a slight tendency for the crossover to make the midrange edgy. The speakers handle all the instrumental characteristics with integrity and give the Servos the ability to sound clear on recordings of chorus and orchestra, and "close" on recordings of solos and small groups.

The tweeters take over at 2,200 Hz and are capable of response to 35,000 Hz. Mounted vertically in the center of each screen, the eight RTR units have adequately wide dispersion and will accurately reproduce the overtones and high frequency fundamentals. One must take care, however, to drive the top with only the finest tube or transistor amplifier or the tweeters sound harsh.

In spite of their good performances, problems have plagued Servos from time to time. These, for the most part, are power supply failure, tweeter burnout, and woofer failure. In the case of the power supply, some of the Series HV diodes fail and one problem becomes more efficient than the other. Often, this is caused by the failure (shorting) of a tweeter. The problems with the woofer are often the result of feedback loop. This causes the bass amplifier to misbehave terribly. None of these problems were too great to be solved, however, and the factory has been more than gracious and expedient in correcting these problems.

In summary, the Servos are very clear, crisp and somewhat bright, but always impressive. After living with them for three years, I can truly say that although they are not always perfect, they give those great moments which may keep me from parting with them for a long time to come.

—FR

HP Comments:

Despite my valiant efforts to do so, I could never establish a satisfactory balance on any of the Servo I's I sampled. If I got the mid-range right, then the bass suffered. If I got the bass right, then the mid-range went to pot. And so on.

The bass is downright mushy. The high end superb. The mid-range very good. They are probably going cheap now that Infinity has superseded the speaker with the Ia. I would be tempted, if the price were right, to do away with the bass commode, and substitute my own crossover for the balance between middle and high frequencies. But, be careful, the Servo I is exceedingly temperamental, and it definitely doesn't cotton to anything less than the best tube amps.