

NuForce S-9 Loudspeaker System

INTRODUCTION

We wish to sincerely thank you for your purchase of the **NuForce S-9**. Although we are sure you will intellectually appreciate its many technological advantages, we are all the more certain your emotional response to its presentation of music will be much greater ...once you hear it. Nevertheless, it seems a cursory overview of the engineering and design objectives behind the sound is in order.

To begin, the NuForce S-9 was conceived on the premise that true high fidelity performance should be based on solid, quantifiable engineering principles while achieving the highest possible degree of value. In order to achieve those goals it became obvious that a slight departure from traditional methods and technologies would be required.

In order to fulfill these objectives, NuForce selected SP Technology Loudspeakers, Inc. as the primary design contractor and initial production manufacturer. The progeny of this union, the NuForce S-9, is now a reality and is poised to establish a new reference for high fidelity loudspeaker performance at a remarkably reasonable price.

Defining one single technological attribute that sets the NuForce S-9 above the competition is impossible. The combined philosophies of NuForce and SP Tech do not permit products to be designed around singular, one-dimensional technological offerings. Instead, they insist upon viewing the product as a complete system, wherein every possible parameter is optimized within established price constraints. Such thorough design requires a much higher level of engineering than is normally encountered in the high fidelity marketplace.

In the earliest days of high fidelity, it was considered that the reduction of all possible forms of distortion to be the key for successful design. In relatively recent times, it seems much of the market has departed from this philosophy. The NuForce S-9 will ultimately prove such departure from rational logic to have been a serious mistake. Although the advanced technological features are many, we will attempt a simple summery here.

Even the most casual observer can hardly miss the “horn-shaped” device in the center of the enclosure. Although it derives its basic principles of operation from horn theory, the more appropriate term is “waveguide.” The waveguide was chosen as a solution to the many problems plaguing even the most expensive and exotic of tweeters. A “point of diminishing returns” is the result of implementing exotic tweeter technologies and their use drives the extreme costs incurred by many other designs. Even when the most

expensive and exotic of devices are used, many problems remain. The waveguide solves virtually all of these issues to a much more refined level than such extreme devices could ever hope to achieve...and at a substantially reduced cost. The elegant solution it provides is nothing more than a proper application of the fundamental physics of acoustical science.

The result is that the waveguide virtually eliminates the most common forms of distortion – the worst offender being excess tweeter diaphragm excursion. It provides a rather large amount of acoustic “gain” at the lower frequency extreme of the tweeter’s operating range. This permits a very large reduction in drive current delivered to the tweeter while still maintaining a flat frequency response. As frequency is increased, the amount of gain provided by the waveguide continually decreases such that at approximately 5 KHz the gain is reduced to “unity.” This means that from 5 KHz on up to the upper limit of tweeter operation (25 kHz) there is no acoustic gain added to the tweeter’s nominal output. *This sloping gain reduction eliminates the “honky” and irritating sound often associated with traditional horns.* Simultaneously, the added gain of the waveguide permits a *crossover frequency of 1.25 KHz*, which is well below most traditional designs. Such a low crossover eliminates much of the undesirable “break-up modes” produced by woofer cones and in so doing, delivers unprecedented detail and resolution in the critical midrange frequencies.

Adding to this, the waveguide provides an elegant solution for three other common problems. Diffraction artifacts (a form of distortion) are essentially eliminated as a result of the gentle sloping nature of the waveguide flare and its transition to the front panel. Other designs employing foam or felt rings around the tweeter, faceted front baffles and/or pyramid shapes only offer a partial solution over a relatively narrow frequency range. The waveguide on the other hand, eliminates diffraction artifacts over the entire operating range of the tweeter.

Time Domain distortion is reduced, as a natural byproduct of the tweeter “set-back” required by the waveguide. This setback reduces the amount of acoustic path-length difference from the woofer and the tweeter to the listener’s ears. Stepped or tilted tweeter baffles and such, along with their associated diffraction anomalies, are simply not needed.

The last major area of improved performance provided by the waveguide is that of controlled dispersion. Without some form of “wave-directing” device, virtually all tweeters will suffer from a somewhat random pattern of sound dispersion. A well-controlled and constant degree of dispersion is much more preferable, especially when real-world listening environments are considered. The NuForce S-9’s waveguide provides such dispersion control as a natural result of its physical geometry.

Aside from the waveguide, many other features need to be highlighted. The large excursion, aluminum cone woofers provide deep powerful bass without suffering from the effects of dynamic compression, as do most woofers. The aluminum cone acts as a type of “heat-sink” – keeping the voice-coil cooler under high power conditions and thereby reducing compression distortions. In addition, due to the rigid nature of

aluminum, the woofers do not exhibit the normal cone flexing or “break-up modes” associated with other cone materials. They behave more as true “pistons” over their operating range and thereby eliminate much of the distortion produced by other typical devices constructed of less rigid materials.

The crossovers alignment is a true, fourth order, Linkwitz-Riley, “acoustic” design. This means that the actual acoustic slopes achieve the Linkwitz-Riley transfer function rather than just considering the electrical components in the crossover – as many do. The fourth order L-R alignment is well known for providing an ideal “in-phase” condition between the drivers at the crossover frequency (1.25 KHz). This condition optimizes vertical dispersion and provides for the widest possible vertical seating angles. Of course, quality polypropylene capacitors and air-core coils are used throughout. Adding to this, the crossover is implemented externally and thereby avoids the potential of micro-phonic distortions being induced by enclosure-born vibrations.

This leads to the last area of the NuForce S-9’s superior design – the enclosure. It is constructed with 23 layers of Baltic-Birch plywood, assembled in a “stacked” configuration. Each layer represents both the external and internal profile of the enclosure. Each layer is precision cut by a CNC routing/boring center and then glued together. The combination of using the material on its “end-grain” along with the large amount of adhesives required, results in an extremely rigid enclosure. Special internal chambers utilized to reduce internal acoustic standing waves, double in their duty by providing added structural cross bracing. The combination results in an extremely rigid construction of moderately low weight (i.e., less mass), which shifts the potential for enclosure-born vibrations to higher frequencies. The effect is to push these unwanted resonances out of the woofer “pass-band” and thereby minimizes the likelihood that the back-energy of the woofer will ever excite them into resonant vibration.

Although far from exhaustive, the above over-view should give the potential customer cause to take notice. It can be seen that clearly, the NuForce S-9 is not just another “me too” high-end loudspeaker. Much engineering and forethought has gone into the design and one would be hard pressed to find an equal at several times its price. Surely, it will be found to offer unprecedented levels of performance and value and will become a benchmark for others to follow.

SETUP

INTRODUCTION

After unpacking the speakers from their boxes, it is wise to inspect them for any damage that they may have incurred during shipment. If there is anything amiss you should contact the dealer from which the system was purchased about the matter as soon as possible.

The NuForce S-9s should be located in a place where traffic will not subject them to being bumped or damaged by pets and small children. They are relatively heavy for their size and should be placed on stable speaker stands designed to support their weight in order to reduce the risk of damage to life or property.

ZOBEL FILTER SWITCH

The Zobel Switch is located at the back of the speaker (in the middle of the back panel) and it should normally be left ON (to the left position). It activates circuitry that dampens potentially excessive ringing which can result from source-signal stimulation of the tweeter's natural free-air resonant frequency. The OFF position is normally used for testing purposes and the setting will not harm the speaker.

WIRING & TERMINATION

Once the NuForce S-9s have been placed in their approximate location, the external crossover box should be placed in a convenient location near them and connected to the speakers via the matching umbilical cable provided. Please observe the direction of the arrow printed on the side of the cable. It should point in the direction of the speaker.

To make the locking connection, rotate the connector such that the small "thumb lock" located on one side is at approximately a 9 o'clock position. Insert each of the male connectors into the female receptacles on the speaker and crossover respectively and then turn clockwise to the 12 o'clock position. You should hear a small "snap" as the connectors lock together. If so, the male connector cannot be removed unless the thumb lock is pulled back and the connector rotated in the reverse order.

Then connect the amplifier to the crossover, observing proper connection polarity. Remember to connect the amplifier output Positive (+) to the RED and Negative (-) to the BLACK terminals of the NuForce S-9 crossovers. Always make sure that the terminals are tightened by HAND as snug as possible. NEVER USE PLIERS OR OTHER TOOLS AS THEY MAKE IT VERY EASY TO OVER TIGHTEN AND DAMAGE THE TERMINAL. Such damage is NOT COVERED under the warranty. See that there are no loose wires or other metal parts touching from one terminal to another as this represents a short-circuit to the amplifier and could cause serious damage to it and then possibly to the speakers(s). The crossovers will accept either bare or tinned wire,

“spade” lugs, or Banana Plugs on their Input Terminals.

SPEAKER PLACEMENT

We recommend the general “rule of thirds” in that 2/3 of the total room width is the space between the speakers and the other 1/3 is divided such that 1/6 is the space from each speaker to the wall nearest to it. The distance from the speakers to the wall behind them should be the same as or greater than the distance from each speaker to its nearest sidewall. They should be toed in toward the center of the room at an angle of approximately 15 to 30 degrees from the sidewall. Although adjusting their angle is somewhat difficult due to their size and weight, it is only possible to determine your personal preference for toe-in by experimentation.

If possible, it is best to place the speakers along the “short” wall in that they are directing the sound outward in a path that travels the longest possible distance before being reflected from the wall at the other end of the room. This will produce a room reverberation time or “ambience” that has a longer period between the direct sound arriving at the listening position and that, which is reflected. Acoustical research has shown that longer period reflections interfere less with one’s ability to perceive the original spatial cues that are encoded in a recording.

Conversely, shorter period reflections such as those that arise from sound being reflected off the walls nearby the speakers are to be especially avoided if possible as they tend to mix or “fuse” with the direct sound. This can greatly degrade the original ambience and imaging cues in a recording. If your budget and interior decor will permit, a relatively large improvement in soundstage and imaging can be had by acoustically treating the walls behind and to the sides of the speakers. The costs are usually marginal and the results often dramatic. Many publications on room acoustics and this technique in particular abound. We would refer you to your public library for further information on the subject.

If you choose not to go to such extremes in your system you can rest assured that, due to the controlled directivity provided by the waveguide, you will have far less room interaction and problems in placement with the NuForce S-9s than many other dynamic speaker systems on the market. The waveguide permits far greater freedom of placement with reduced sensitivity to nearby wall reflections.

The amount of “toe-in angle” needed to achieve optimal results is less than many other speakers and it is often found that as little as 5 degrees is sufficient. Please note that if a more “solid” monophonic image is desired, you can try increasing the amount of toe-in angle by as much as 45° or place them closer together. Be advised that some experimentation is usually a “good thing.”

OPERATION



Before applying AC power to your components for the first time it is best to turn down the gain and/or volume controls of your amplifier(s). If you have a separate pre-amp and power amp setup, then you should proceed with caution as the gain of both devices operated in unison can be excessive. Start out by playing a sample of music that is known to contain a loud passage.

Begin by playing this passage from its source (i.e., CD, Phono, etc.) with the main volume control turned all the way down and any electronic tone controls set to "flat." SLOWLY turn up the volume to a level that is as loud as you will ever normally care to listen. If the pre-amp is at full volume, then turn it back down and readjust the power amp's gain controls (if your power amplifier has them) to a slightly higher setting. Repeat this process until the pre-amp's volume control is at about 3 o'clock when the music is as loud as you will ever prefer.

AT ALL TIMES BE LISTENING FOR ANY DISTORTION AND WATCH FOR ANY EXCESSIVE WOOFER CONE EXCURSION! If this should occur, **TURN THE VOLUME DOWN IMMEDIATELY!** Although the NuForce S-9s will produce a greater sound pressure level (SPL) than many other speaker system for their size and price, as with any component, they still have their limitations.

Because of the wide Dynamic Range and very low distortion levels produced by the NuForce S-9s, it can be very tempting to "push" them to excessive levels. Due to their very high power handling capability, the onset of audible distortion does not usually occur unless it is due to amplifier distortion. Because of this, there can be little warning that the electrical power limit of the speaker is being reached. The upshot is that the speakers will sound excellent right up to the point of destruction. Rest assured this only happens when they are being used with amplifiers having ratings in excess of 250 watts per channel into 4 ohms!!!

A certain amount of common sense is called for here, as at that point such volume levels would be considered by any reasonable person to be excessive for home or "Near Field" use. All NuForce products are designed to reproduce a Dynamic Range that, for their intended application, approaches that of live music. Compared to most other "High End" speakers, the NuForce S-9s will play VERY LOUD!

In fact, if they are driven by an undistorted power amplifier (200+ W/Ch.) they will play louder in an average size living room than anyone should ever play a set of speakers for the sake of their own hearing safety. It is for this reason that the warranty does not cover damage to driver units due to over-powering. We don't mean to belabor the issue. We just want to do all that we can to help you understand that everything has its limits - including your hearing... so BE CAREFUL!!!

At this point it's time to settle down to some serious listening. Select from your favorite recordings and compare them. You will find that some excel while others are not as good as you once thought. This can bring both much satisfaction and occasional disappointment.



The NuForce S-9s were designed to be as accurate as possible and in so being, they will often reveal the poor recording techniques so often used in mass marketed music. It is the quest for quality recordings that many audiophiles find themselves engaged in once they have assembled a sufficiently revealing system. Although you will undoubtedly discover that all of your recordings come to life in a way never before experienced, you may also find yourself in a similar quest. If so, we encourage you in your newfound journey and are quite pleased to have helped you to “set sail” on that course. For the experienced listeners, we hope to we have helped you along the way. In any case, we wish you all many years of listening pleasure.

Listening Impressions

Upon first hearing the speaker, you will find the S-9 to be one of the “fastest” speakers you have ever heard. The technical reason for this is that the attacks and decays in the program material are reproduced with extreme accuracy. You will find that the S-9s do not sound like horns, and they do not sound like electrostatics, but they project many of the advantages each without most of their associated problems.

On the one hand, they offer the very high speed and excellent transparency as is claimed the best electrostatics have to offer – but without their dynamic limitations. On the other, they deliver the very widest dynamic range like the best horn speakers, but without the nasality and “honkiness” often associated with them. Adding to all of this...they create a holographic level of imaging and sound-staging that is far superior to any horn speaker and better than many electrostatic designs. In fact, the imaging of the NuForce S-9 speakers rivals any mini-monitor on the market, regardless of price.

The harmonic content, the textures and the timbre of instruments are amazingly accurate. One other quality that will surprise you is the bass. Its extension simply goes much lower than you would expect, given the size of the speaker. While many others claim low frequency response from small speakers, in practice they simply don't deliver or... whatever bass they do produce is garbled by excessive distortion at anything but the most modest of drive levels. Not with this speaker. The bass is deep and powerful while remaining tuneful, detailed and full of texture and presence. It is punchy; has lots of slam and more than fast enough to keep up with the rest of the speaker. But don't take our word for it...just listen for yourself and see if you don't agree!

Nuforce Three (3) Year Limited Warranty

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