



I Scream, You Scream, We All Scream for IBeam!



Wow, just wow. Now you already know how much I like the product at the very beginning of the review, but stick around and I'll explain why. You will dig the way Rockford Fosgate's new Ibeam (IB200) works.

Having been involved in the car audio industry for nearly 20 years, I am no stranger to the "bass shaker". These devices have been around in several different variations through the years. Aura Sound and Alpine had versions, Earthquake came out with a really nasty one a few years ago. These have never really taken off in the marketplace, for whatever reason. Maybe the timing wasn't right. Cars were bigger, people had more cash to blow on big systems, less people leased cars, no noise pollution laws, whatever. I think now the time has come for what Rockford Fosgate describes as the "IBeam Tactile Transducer". More than a bass shaker, this device actually emulates the output of a 10-subwoofer (in my opinion).

How It Works

Let's dig a little deeper here. All speakers are transducers, subs, mids, and highs all turn electrical current into sound waves via the movement of the cone. What the IBeam does is translate the electrical energy into mechanical energy with motors and weights. Most bass shakers are not very powerful; they simply lack the mass to do much more than shake a chair with a fair amount of rumble to match the sound, like a PlayStation2 controller. The IBeam uses patent pending technology to bring not only the feel of a subwoofer, but also the sound. It does this through coupling.

Those of you that are familiar with acoustics already understand that coupling is a key component to car audio. Take a subwoofer and suspend it in the car, and you will have bass. Bolt the same enclosure to the vehicles chassis, and you get the buzz in your feet to match the beat in your ears. This enhances the feeling of a subwoofer system. Rockford Fosgate's IBeam literally turns the chassis of the car into a giant resonator, emulating a subwoofer. I have had the bass shaker experience before, so I knew what to expect. What I got was way more.



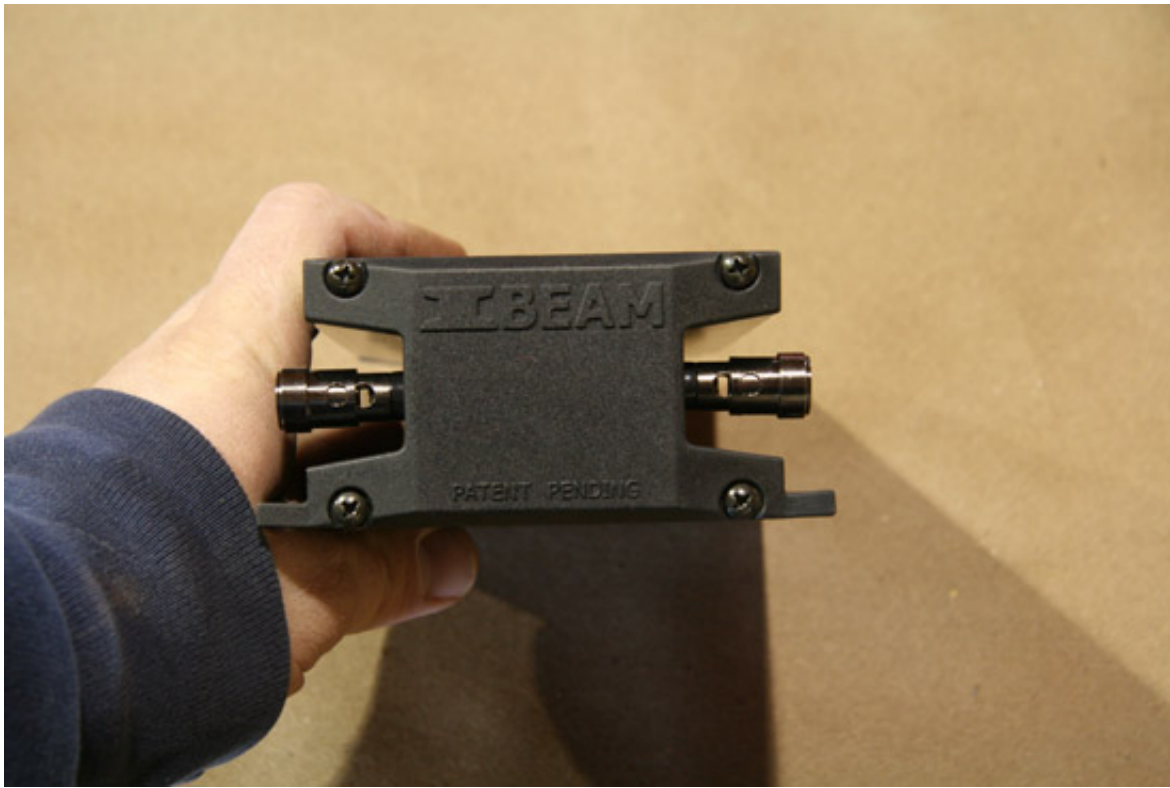
Location, Location, Location

I tried a couple of different locations for the IBeam in my 1971 Buick GS convertible. I started with the unit just lying on the floor, powered by a 200-watt amp. It buzzed, you could feel it a little, but it's not designed to lay loose. So it was screwed down to the floor, on top of the carpet under the center console. That's when the entire car came alive. The GS does not have a subwoofer, just a pair of Rockford Fosgate Power 5.25" components in the kicks. With no more than 200 watts and the IBeam, you would swear there was a 10" sub in the trunk.



About the size of a pack of hot dogs, you can put this thing anywhere. The key is bolt it to the chassis. It does not do much just lying there. You could easily screw this down to the frame of a couch, bed or even your office desk chair.

The GS is loaded with Dynamat Xtreme, so buzzes and rattles are at a minimum already, but the IBeam didn't exaggerate any rattles or buzzing, but the bass sensation was very real. With this type of unit, you don't get the pressurized air like a true subwoofer, but that is not necessarily a bad thing. Pressurizing the air is what leads to hearing loss, and at 33, I don't need any more of that! What I did get was a great sounding system that didn't hurt my ears and piss off my neighbors (or the cops).



At only 2-inches tall, the IBeam is small. You can hold it your palm, as long as it is not playing that is. It wires up just like a typical speaker.

Next, I mounted the IBeam to the underside of the driver's seat. This changed things a little. The entire car was not quite as energized as before, but I felt every nuance in my "cheeks". This would be a great solution for the family mini-van—you get the bass without irritating the wife or hurting the kids' ears. Personally, I preferred the direct floor-mount. It is great with a sub, but it gets the job done by itself. If you had a really small car, like a SMART car, this thing would be perfect.



I preferred the central location under the center console in the Buick. This coupled with the car very well and it was out of the way and hidden. When bolted to the seat, it shakes your booty a little more, which would be great if you were using the IBeam in addition to the a true subwoofer.

Aside from the automotive environment, the IBeam is very versatile. Bolt it to the frame of the couch and movies and video games take on a whole new life. Slap it to your office desk chair and those mundane 8-5s will go much faster. If you are really into trying new things, mount one (or even two) to the bed frame and crank the volume. But I digress.

The IBeam is capable of handling 250 watts, and has a nominal 4-ohm impedance. You should know that wiring this to your head unit is still going to be a bad idea. You need an amp, albeit not a very big one. One hundred watts is all you need to get the IBeam to generate its 2.5 lbs/watt SPL. Since it is not a speaker, it is not measured in dBs, it is measured in force per watt. This is basically how much shake it has. While 2.5 lbs per watt sounds like this thing turns into a jackhammer at 100 watts, it is not that crazy, since it measures a scant 2"x 4.25"x6.875" and weighs only 2.5 pounds. You wouldn't be able to use it as a replacement air hammer, but it will certainly rock your car. Or house. Or cubicle. Or bedroom. Like I said, it's versatile—and definitely visceral. If you haven't tried it then you probably don't know yet that you want one, but trust me, you do. You may even want more than one.

Source

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