

NXG NX-BAS-500 Subwoofer

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Introduction

The subject of this review is the NXG [NX-BAS-500](#). The NX-BAS-500 subwoofer has a 12" front firing woofer with a rear facing port. It measures 18"x14.75"x17.75" (HWD), including feet and grill, and tips the scales at just 35 pounds. The amp is Class D and rated at 500 watts "Dynamic Power", whatever that means. The quoted frequency response is 18Hz-120Hz. There is a 2 year warranty, which is on the generous side given the selling price.

NXG primarily offers architectural and in-wall speakers now, but at one point they did make a few different models of bookshelf and satellite speakers (I actually owned some myself). The only "stand alone" products they currently make are powered subwoofers, and there are just three of those. The NX-BAS-500 is their newest model, which was released just a few months ago.

Ordering

NXG does not sell directly to the public, and there are only a handful of places to purchase from; they only list 4 authorized distributors on their website, so your options are limited. So who are the select few authorized distributors? Well, one of them is Home Depot. No, that's not a misprint. Has anyone ever actually gone to Home Depot to shop for HT equipment? I certainly haven't, and I doubt too many others have, so that one strikes me as a bit confusing. Thankfully the remainder of the distributors are more fitting.

A quick web search uncovers a precious few companies selling the NX-BAS-500, most of which are indeed the authorized distributors, so it appears as though NXG is sticking to those distributors. The retail price quoted seems to vary but the predominant selling price is about \$260, a veritable bargain given what this subwoofer is capable of.

Unboxing

The NX-BAS-500 came double boxed, with the outer box being slightly thicker than most. There were large soft foam blocks covering the entire top and bottom of the cabinet. The sub itself was wrapped in a mylar bag. All-in-all, the protection was above average for an inexpensive subwoofer.

The only accessories were a 3 prong power cord and an 8 page owners manual. There are no carpet spikes, just the rubber feet already attached to the cabinet. That's pretty standard for a budget subwoofer though, so the lack of accessories is par for the course and not a real negative. The manual turned out to be pretty decent too; a few of the descriptions leave something to be desired, but overall it's really not bad.

Initial Impressions

Given the fact this is a bass reflex sub with a 12" driver and 3" port it's not all that large, a nice benefit for people who don't necessarily want a subwoofer to dominate their home theater. That also gives it a good WAF (Wife Acceptance Factor) score, since it doesn't really stand out. The rear facing port could potentially create placement issues for those who want to butt the NX-BAS-500 right up to the back wall since you need to keep it a foot or so away.

The cabinet has a .5" roundover on the edges and is wrapped in a lightly textured vinyl which NXG calls Black Pebble. It was applied smoothly and evenly with the seam on the bottom panel. The all MDF construction consists of a 1" front panel, with 5/8" used for the back, sides, top and bottom. On the inside there's a brace that ties the left and right side panels to the top and bottom ones. NXG went the extra mile with their brace too; it's actually glued in a channel that's cut into all 4 panels, making it more rigid and stable. Rarely do you find a subwoofer in this price class that even has a brace, let alone one with this attention to detail. Construction in general was better than average, with no indication of a sloppy glue job or slapped together panels. All the screws were tight already.

There are 1" acrylic damping sheets lining the top, bottom and side panels, but this is an area I think NXG should have expended a bit more effort. It was just press fit into place and when I removed the driver to take pictures a few corner sections had already come down. A couple of minutes with some aerosol adhesive did the trick, but that's something NXG should be doing at the factory.

Keeping with its budget roots the NX-BAS-500 feels light when picked up, and the traditional 'knuckle rap test' returns a fairly hollow sound. Another telltale sign of this unit's modest origins is the fact that you really can't put anything on top, unless you want it to end up on the floor. Since I always have at least 4 or 5 subwoofers waiting to be reviewed I'm inclined to place all the accessories that come with a particular unit on top of it, just so they don't get lost or mixed up with anything else. In the case of the NX-BAS-500 the manual and power cord kept vibrating themselves right onto the floor. If you're the type who puts a vase or lamp on a subwoofer you should reconsider that strategy if you buy one of these.

The driver is held in place with wood screws, which are different from the wood screws used to hold the decorative trim ring that surrounds it. NXG utilizes a stamped steel basket, single slug ferrite magnet -- which appears to be a bit larger than most in this price class -- and a good size

bump-out with a 1" vent for the voice coil. The rear firing port is 3" wide and 9" long, with flares on both ends to cut down on any wind turbulence (port noise). There's a small notch cut into the internal cabinet brace for the port, which was glued in place, so it shouldn't be going anywhere.

The most unique part about the driver is its "gold injection molded metallic anodized" cone. It has a very large inverted dust cap and a massive Polymeric rubber surround. NXG calls this a 'high excursion' driver, and just looking at it you can tell that's probably true. What also seems inescapable, at least to me, is how similar in appearance it is to the drivers BIC America uses in their F-12 and PL-200 subwoofers. I have no idea if they're comparable though, so I'm just speculating here, but their resemblance to each other is rather uncanny.

The grill is a sturdy piece, with a 5/8" frame made from MDF. Due to the decorative trim ring around the driver the frame itself has sections routed out to aid fitment, otherwise the grill wouldn't sit flush. Because of the cutouts it can only fit on one way, but ironically there are probably those who will never even use the grill. Why? The driver has a pretty unique appearance, and quite a bit of excursion, so I envision some people wanting to see it in action. I ran it like that for a while, and I did find myself gawking at the driver from time to time.

Listening

My living room is 13x17x8 (1768 CF), so it's not terribly large. The main seating position is approximately 11 feet from the subwoofer. All testing was done after the unit had been run in for at least 15 hours.

Once broken in the NX-BAS-500 became an easy subwoofer to live with on a day-to-day basis, producing a solid amount of bass even when doing nothing more than watching TV. Though it had a very noticeable presence the output never came across as the phony, over-embellished noise that some inexpensive subwoofers tend towards. The NX-BAS-500 struck me as just a solid performer, which is quite a statement for someone like myself to make about a \$260 subwoofer.

Is it perfect? Of course not, but it only had a few missteps. One of those revolves around a pet peeve of mine unfortunately; it doesn't come out of standby easily enough, and it goes back into it too quickly. For most of the review I had to use On instead of Auto because it kept going in and out too frequently. Very annoying. I also found 60Hz a better crossover setting than my normal 80Hz because some male voices would occasionally come across as a bit thick on the higher setting. I'm particularly sensitive to that phenomenon though, so you may not even notice it yourself.

The good points certainly outweigh the bad points though. The limiter is a classic example; I don't recall a single time that either the driver or port made any disturbing sounds. Even when pushed it seemed intent on remaining composed. Considering some of the material I threw at it that's a noteworthy accomplishment. The pitch definition was very good as well, articulating the various facets of a sound track cleanly. It was especially easy to tune, requiring almost no fiddling. In essence I hooked everything up, made a few adjustments and off it went. Definitely one of the easiest subwoofers I've ever tried to integrate into my system. On occasion I've found myself liking a subwoofer right out of the box, and the NX-BAS-500 was one such unit.

Movies/TV

I run each test scene twice; once while seated in my normal listening position, and then a second time while sitting a few feet from the subwoofer. This allows me to hear it as I normally would, yet also affords me the opportunity to determine if the subwoofer is straining even the slightest bit. Both tests are run at the same volume level, which is slightly above what I would normally use on a day-to-day basis.

Underworld: Awakening (blu-ray)

At the beginning of Scene 9, where the half-breed child Eve is cutting her arm seemingly fascinated by the fact that she heals instantly, the subterranean vibrations courtesy of the encroaching Lycans had surprisingly good clarity for such a humble subwoofer. You could actually hear the distinct crackling sound of the cave walls as pieces started to fall. The gunshots from the battle between the Lycans and members of the coven didn't quite have the impact they should have had, but they were quite evident and sharp. When that huge Lycan makes its initial appearance in Scene 10 his footsteps were really clear, and even created a bit of feel that was transmitted to my chair. Overall the performance of the NX-BAS-500 was very impressive; this is one of the most brutal low-bass soundtracks there currently is -- and it should have laid waste to a budget minded subwoofer at the volume I was listening -- but it didn't.

Black Hawk Down (blu-ray)

This movie is notorious for having a few scenes that contain blasts of really deep bass, including the famous Irene scene. So where did I jump to first? Yup, you guessed it. As it turns out, this may have been one of those times where the limiter kicked in; while the bass was certainly good it was short of guttural, meaning the sound from the chopper blades could have used a bit more kick. At least the NX-BAS-500 didn't try to do something it wasn't able to and make embarrassing sounds, so the trade off was appropriate in my mind. When Super 6 1 gets shot down by an RPG in Scene 6 there was sufficient impact to make it seem real. Same for the ancillary sounds of battle; gun shots, artillery explosions and the like all came through with authority.

Cloverfield (blu-ray)

The initial explosion that occurs when the friends are all sitting on the fire escape was very detailed and precise, with enough force to make it seem as though something really had just blown up. The subsequent explosion -- when everyone from the party is on the roof trying to determine what just occurred -- had good depth, as did the sound of the debris crashing down around them. When the Brooklyn Bridge gets destroyed in Scene 6 the NX-BAS-500 was sending ripples of bass into my chair, all the while maintaining excellent dynamics. The best part was during Scene 8 though, when the ground troops first engage the alien beast. My notes simply say "this thing sounds a lot better than a \$260 subwoofer should". The precision and poise displayed was a very pleasant surprise. Individual elements came through decisively, yet they maintained clarity.

Avatar (blu-ray)

I generally start with the Assault On Home Tree scene because it always struck me as a good test for the capabilities of any subwoofer. By now I was beginning to believe the NX-BAS-500 would be able to handle some additional volume, so I upped the ante to -10dB. I'm glad I did.

As the gunships begin their approach the engine sounds came across with a nice rumble, lending a convincing tone. When the gas rounds were deployed they exploded with a pleasing "thump".

The incendiary rounds and missiles the soldiers fired next were reproduced with distinct impacts, accompanied by a solid percussive sound. The NX-BAS-500 really came into its own and showed how articulate it could be when the roots of Home Tree begin to separate from the pounding they took. The definition I heard belied what an inexpensive ported subwoofer generally produces. I felt the same when the warrior clans riding their beasts descend upon the ground troops. The bass rumbled to life, but it wasn't just a cacophony of noise. Instead I was treated to a very convincing sound of what a horde of stampeding beasts might sound like, with each element of the backdrop easily distinguishable.

After all the testing had concluded I checked the amp to see how hot it had gotten, but it was nothing more than warm. Not warm as in "does that feel awfully warm to you?", but more like everyday use warm. It certainly didn't seem like I had just been pushing it, which I was.

Music

Up to this point I found myself pleasantly surprised by what the NX-BAS-500 had been capable of, especially with movie soundtracks, but it wasn't until I started playing songs in earnest that I came to the realization someone at NXG must enjoy music. Put succinctly, this may very well be the most musical under \$300 subwoofer I've ever heard. I took full advantage of that fact too, playing a large selection of music.

Joe Bonamassa - Dust Bowl (CD)

From Joe's live CD -- recorded at New York's famous Beacon Theater in 2012 -- I queued up the title track from one of his biggest selling studio albums, Dust Bowl. As is the case with most of Joe's songs, this is a smokey blues tune with a great rhythm to it. Another reason I went with something from this CD is because I happen to be a live music fanatic, having been to perhaps 200 shows in my life (large venues, small venues, outdoor festivals, bars, you name it - if there's live music count me in). Joe Bonamassa is a treat to watch, so if you get the chance go see him. This recording, like a tremendous number of live shows, is bottom heavy, and the NX-BAS-500 was definitely up to the task. Carmine Rojas on the bass and Tal Bergman on drums anchor this version of the band, and they both came through with equal amounts power and precision. Even with the volume cranked up to -15dB there was no sign of strain. The NX-BAS-500 seemed to be loving it as much as I was. Dust Bowl proved so enjoyable that I ended up listening to the entire 1st CD of this 2 disc set.

Pride And Glory - Horse Called War (CD)

Pride And Glory was essentially a one album project from Zakk Wylde, the guy who started Black Label Society and played in Ozzy Osbourne's band. If that's not enough metal cred to make him legit in that genre of music he also played the guitarist in a Mark Wahlberg movie called Rock Star (which, frankly, did nothing more than prove that Zakk should stick to what he does best; wail on his guitar). This band plays the type of music you'd get if you crossed Lynyrd Skynyrd with Guns N Roses. Hard to imagine, I know, but it worked for Zakk. Their self-titled debut/only album comes screaming out of the gate with three high energy rockers. One of those -- Shine On -- actually had some radio play back in the day, which is unusual for this type of music. For whatever reason Horse Called War was always my favorite though.

Horse Called War has a fast paced rhythm with a lot of transitions, courtesy of James LoMenzo and Brian Tichy. This is my kind of song for sure, and the NX-BAS-500 had no problem keeping

up with it. Sadly the dynamics are a little compressed on the recording itself, so the sound quality is not as good as it could have been, but the NX-BAS-500 made the best of a bad situation.

***Jonny Lang - Lie To Me* (CD)**

I went from a poorly engineered CD to a wonderfully engineered one, and this budget subwoofer simply ate it up. For those familiar with Lie To Me Jonny's vocals and Rob Stupka's right foot on the kick drum pedal are the most prominent parts, and the NX-BAS-500 was not shy about the latter part; every time Rob slammed his foot down on that pedal the kick drum hit with a sharp thud. Even with that bombast there was the omnipresent bass of David Smith, which was not drowned out by the exaggerated drums. Under normal circumstances I only play a few select tracks when I'm reviewing a subwoofer, but not this time - I listened to the entire CD. Even when I cranked it pretty loud the NX-BAS-500 didn't seem to break a sweat, no small feat when you consider the bass energy recorded on these tracks.

***Pink Floyd - Dark Side Of The Moon* (CD)**

I decided to take a gamble and play one of my favorite albums of all time, something I'm generally loathe to do when reviewing a "budget" subwoofer. However, in this instance I had the feeling it wouldn't be such a bad idea, so I went the CD and up went the volume. Thankfully I wasn't disappointed.

Speak To Me opens with that bass drum heart beat, which the NX-BAS-500 produced with surprising clarity and depth. Roger Waters bass guitar was rich and powerful, especially on the open 'e' note when this song transitions into Breathe. Time was another pleasant surprise, because it had the same power and depth from Rogers bass; when he plucked that thing I actually felt a ripple being transmitted into my chair. Time is my second favorite song of all time (no pun intended) -- Comfortably Numb being my absolute favorite -- and this inexpensive subwoofer did justice to Time better than some I've tested which cost twice what the NX-BAS-500 does. This was another disk I listened to in its entirety because I simply didn't want to turn it off. For those keeping count that's three CD's I listened to from front to back, something I have never done with a budget sub before.

Conclusion

NXG should be commended; instead of creating what almost everyone else does when designing a subwoofer at this price point -- a less than accurate "one note" boom box -- they instead choose to go for articulation and precision. In so doing they may have sacrificed a bit of lower extension, but not enough where it ever seemed to be lacking. I never anticipated being able to call a \$260 subwoofer articulate, but in this case I can; rare is the budget sub that makes music enjoyable, yet this one did. The NX-BAS-500's somewhat generic appearance and easy on the wallet price does not portend its abilities which, relative to the selling price, are quite considerable. With effective limiters that make it almost impossible to trip up NXG has developed a subwoofer that I would have absolutely no problem recommending.