

ON TEST

Nexo ID Series

Nexo's ID Series is designed to combine high quality sound reproduction with the utmost flexibility of use, in the tiniest and lightest of packages. Simon Allen assesses the result . . .



**ABOUT THE EXPERT
SIMON ALLEN**

Simon Allen is an internationally recognised freelance engineer/producer and pro audio professional with over a decade of experience. Working mostly in music, his reputation as a FOH and studio mix engineer continues to reach new heights.
simona@lsionline.co.uk

Going small has certainly become a common trend, but the ID series is more than just Nexo's new 'smaller' box; the best description I can find is 'problem solvers'. Their impressively small size and flexible mounting options bring a new dynamic to Nexo's product line. They present many benefits, including projecting sound in hard-to-reach places for better coverage, and being easily hidden where larger speakers could be aesthetically unpleasant . . .

Before being given this opportunity to learn about these new units, I believe like many, I had made some assumptions about how they would sound. I certainly left this demonstration, held at Orbital's London premises, with a fond appreciation for this new range from Nexo. Apparently, good things really do come in small packages.

SERIES OVERVIEW

The ID Series is made up of five models. Essentially, there are three versions of the ID24 'top box' - each the same size and driver configuration, but offering different mounting and dispersion specifications. These are suitably named the ID24t (for 'touring'), the ID24i (for 'install') and the ID24c ('a la carte') which can be fitted with a range of HF directivities. Then there are two models of sub - the ID S110 and ID S210.

The ID24 is based on a V-formation of two 4" drivers with an HF compression driver in the centre. Whilst small drivers are becoming more commonplace in live sound reinforcement applications, it's been a while since a manufacturer has placed drivers in a V-formation. Nexo R&D says the ID24 is the first cabinet to be designed using 'Finite Element Analysis'. Its development was governed by the height and width objectives, for discreet under-balcony or front-fill - hence the choice of a double 4". To achieve wide frequency range directivity control, the cabinet needed reasonable depth for the HF horn; the V architecture for the 4" fits neatly into that depth and provides a much more stable horizontal control than setting the drivers flat. This is, of course, the aim of the ID24, to deliver sound to areas that might otherwise be difficult to reach. These could include unusual spaces or in theatres where the main left-centre-right system doesn't reach under a balcony.

The other obvious reason drivers are sometimes mounted in a V-formation is for coupling and efficiency. Nexo, known for producing high-output speaker systems, have probably used this layout to achieve greater SPL from these small-diameter drivers. I had some concern that perhaps this layout might sound 'phase-y' or distorted, but this certainly wasn't apparent, as I will explain later.



“Considering their size and the 4” drivers, the performance of these little boxes is remarkable. This, coupled with the available mounting options, is where the magic of the ID Series really lies.”

For directivity of sound, it's the high frequencies that matter the most, of course. Here, Nexo is using a high compression driver which is user-rotatable, without any need for tools. The horn can be turned for vertical or horizontal mounting, to deliver 120° x 40° either way. These dispersion angles are a good compromise between a directional solution for pointing at certain areas, and not being too narrow for a standard stereo setup. For example, a pair of ID24s could serve as a small background music system, although this dispersion isn't as wide as Nexo's PS8, for example.

If this dispersion won't suit your application, then the ID24c can be fitted with a choice of horns. Nexo offers a 60° x 60°, 90° x 40°, 120° x 60° and, of course, the standard 120° x 40°. The ID24 touring and installation models are available in black or white, as well as any RAL colour by custom order, for installations where speakers might need to be blend in with the decor. The ID24i is an off-the-shelf model for installations, where the connection is a captive cable for permanent and secure wiring.

At Orbital, I saw and heard the touring model ID24t, which well demonstrates the basis for the whole range. All three models are IP54-rated and therefore suitable for 'all-weather' scenarios. The ID24t features Speakon connectors and quick-release mounting points for Nexo's range of mounting accessories. These enable ID24s to be set up alongside larger systems as delay lines, additional monitoring, or even by themselves in a normal, small concert fashion.

NEXO has developed its own range of ID mounting accessories for the ID24s and the method of attaching these mounts is very slick; for example, no tools are required to attach the flying accessories onto the ID24t touring version. Standard K&M parts such as the pole mount can be used, but NEXO's accessories offer a number of benefits and are well thought through. Perhaps we'll see this style of 'clip' appear on future Nexo products: I use the term 'clip' because the mounts simply clip onto the IDs effortlessly. This design also leaves the exterior of the ID24 box with just a few mounting holes instead of extra hardware, thereby helping to keep it very lightweight.



These mounting points are on all sides of the cabinets, and the various mounts available offer a range of placement possibilities. They facilitate horizontal and vertical positioning, under-balcony hanging, stage front-fill, vertically flown, wedge monitoring and, of course, pole-mounted options.

SUBS

The ID S110 and ID S210 are, as their names suggest a single 10" and a double 10" respectively. Like the ID24s, however, the concept here is space saving and unusually the drivers are mounted horizontally. This results in both these subs only lying 285mm high, with the S210 simply double the width.

These compact subs offer a wide range of placement opportunities such as under furniture, hidden in walls, under stairs and, of course, under stages. Both models cover a frequency range of 43-130Hz, with the S110 having a peak SPL of 125dB and the S210 reaching 131dB peak SPL. Each model, paired with Nexo's amp and controller, can operate at either 85Hz or 120Hz crossover points, which we experimented with at Orbital. The S110 is 4 Ohms and has a max power handling of 650W, with the S210 therefore being 2 Ohms with max power handling of 1300W.

The release of the ID Series also brought a new amp and controller unit from Nexo, which offers new levels of power and flexibility. In addition, there's Nexo's large NXAMP Series, which can also be used with the ID Series. A single NXAMP4X1 can power up to 16 ID24s from its 4 channels of amplification. Each channel can, of course, run separate presets and it has all the expected modern features such as a remote monitoring app. The NXAMP4X1 also boasts less rack space and more Digital I/O options for integrating with the latest sound reinforcement systems.

← From far left: The ID24; the unit pole-mounted; rear view

The new products, however, include the DTDAMP and DTD Digital TD Controller, which are only 1U each. By separating the control and amplification aspects of the system into separate products, Nexo aims to offer a more cost-effective solution. This should be particularly useful for hire companies who will be able to mix and match their stock for a variety of jobs.

The DTDAMP is suitable for smaller setups where the NXAMP4X1 would be over-kill. There are two available versions of the DTDAMP, one 4 x 700W and the other 4 x 1300W, both offering 4 channels of 4 Ohm outputs. This is really impressive from within only a 1U rack space. There are also two versions of the DTD Controller: one for touring with complete I/O on analogue XLR, digital AES and Dante inputs and SP-4 connections; the other is an install grade unit with all I/O on the rear panel and configured via USB with a Mac or PC.

LISTENING EXPERIENCE

Orbital placed the system in their warehouse, which I think it's safe to say it isn't the best acoustical environment available! However, it did provide a likely real-world scenario and in a large enough environment that we could experience these little speakers from a distance, walking around to hear coverage and dispersion characteristics.

We were listening to a pair of ID24ts pole-mounted on two ID S110s, with the latest DTD Controller and DTDAMP, placed as a regular left-right small PA system. Sonically, I was surprised. There were two aspects of the system that immediately caught my attention. The first was the sheer amount of high-frequency content and clarity. I'm not referring to a 'thin' or 'tinny' sound by any means, but the job that the new Nexo HF compression-drivers are doing is phenomenal. The smooth high-frequency response was very detailed and extremely pleasing to hear at a distance. These new drivers have a much smoother response that remains clear all the way through to the ultra-highs.

The second notable aspect to the sound was of course the subs. Although these are low-profile subs with only 10" drivers, they're less coloured than you might imagine and perform like a much larger touring sub. Their sound was on a par with the roundness you would expect from a dual 18" touring sub, even though they're not moving as much air. I wouldn't say they provide the fastest transients that I've ever heard from sub, but equally they're not sluggish and project well.

This then leads us to the mid-range from that all-new V-formation of dual 4" drivers. This is probably where anyone new to the system will be the most sceptical, as I was. As I've mentioned, it was the two extremes of the highs and lows that surprised me the most about the system. This suggests the mid-range wasn't as



apparent, which is probably true. However, this isn't the purpose of the ID24s. The mid-range was certainly still there and in proportion to the entire sonic picture. I didn't hear any phasing-style issues, or distortions, which some may have expected. Considering these are only 4" drivers the output is highly impressive, just not quite as 'round' as some larger top speakers offer. Moving the crossover on the subs to 120Hz obviously helped.

We then replaced the ID24s with a pair of PS8s which highlighted that punchy 8" driver sound that we all love so much. This gives me an opportunity to highlight how good the PS8s still sound. They have to be, and still are, one of the best products Nexo manufactures - easily being one of the most influential live sound products of all time. The high-frequencies are clear and match other more modern systems with ease, particularly with the new amp and controller. I assume the preset on the DTD Controller for the PS8s is more refined than we've heard before, because they were simply excellent. Paired with the ID S110 subs, this would be an adequate and very mobile PA system capable of small but powerful gigs.



In a nutshell, the dream would be to take the horns from the ID24s and the 8" mid-range from the PS8s. However, this isn't the purpose of either product. What Nexo have developed is a small speaker for carrying clarity to all corners of any venue. I could easily appreciate the ID24s would be excellent for this, and as part of a larger rig they would be sonically more useful than the PS8s. For projecting vocal content and adding clarity to music, it was very easy to hear how the ID24s are certainly fit for purpose, despite their size.



PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATIONS

I have saved talking about the size of the ID24s until now. I feel this deserves a separate mention as they're, well . . . tiny! Measuring just 309mm wide, 132mm high and 233mm front-to-back they really are small. Considering their size and the 4" drivers, the performance of these little boxes is remarkable. This, coupled with the available mounting options is where the magic of the ID Series really lies.

Until now, Nexo only really had the PS8 for similar applications, but the PS8 is larger and offers fewer inconspicuous mounting options. The directivity of sound from the ID24s is also much tighter, especially with the range of narrower dispersions available. As a result, when used as part of a larger system they will cause less interference. The mounting options available for these speakers offer a new precedent in distributing sound where it's needed whilst still being aesthetically discreet.

Based on my own background, I can see that one of the biggest benefits of

↑ From top: The ID24 in various mounting configurations - flown, stage monitor and installed with standard K&M flying hardware



- ↑ ID24's vertical horn configuration
- The ID-S110
- ↓ The ID-S210



"By spreading sound around a venue with the ID Series, noise pollution and overall level concerns can be helped, which is a massive bonus for many venues as we know."

NEXO ID SERIES TECH SPEC

FEATURES

- ▶ Measures just 309mm W x 132mm H x 233mm D
- ▶ Rotatable horn for 120° x 40° or 40° x 120° HF coverage
- ▶ Dedicated Install and Touring versions
- ▶ Compact, low-profile subs also available

APPLICATIONS

- ▶ Under balcony in theatres
- ▶ Stage front-fill
- ▶ Pole-mounted
- ▶ Flown in a touring system
- ▶ Wedge monitor

the ID Series is in aiding the coverage of sound in theatres. For many theatres, by adding a higher number of speakers in balconies, side seating and boxes, the coverage of sound will be more consistent than simply building a bigger left-centre-right stack. The ID range will supplement the power given by the main PA by delivering exactly what's typically lost in those hard-to-reach corners.

Equally, the speed of adding more speakers to a system for an auditorium should be faster too. The clamps are fast and secure, with a range of mounts that should fit nearly any scenario. I can see specifying ID speakers into touring packages becoming a preference as more system designers can easily place them in positions that may have otherwise been hard to include. The weight of a single ID24 is only 6kg, so adding them to even the most simple trussing shouldn't impose on any limitations.

The two subs available with the ID Series will also open up some possibilities for sound designers, making the coverage of low frequencies across complicated venues easier to provide. These subs can be hidden under seats, stairs, or in corners of a room where a typical sub of similar power and performance simply won't fit. I can see them being extremely useful in cinema installations too. By spreading sound around a venue with the ID Series,

noise pollution and overall level concerns can be helped, which is a massive bonus for many venues as we know.

CONCLUSION

Nexo speakers are a common choice for touring, install and commercial applications, with a strong hand in theatre sound. These new units are set to enhance the potential of all Nexo systems. The size and mounting options available for the ID24s offer necessary solutions for today's audio expectations.

The new amp and controller units are a significant advance over previous incarnations. The DTDAMP in particular delivers an impressive specification within only 1U. Coupled with the DTD Controller, the control, protection and monitoring of the ID Series is fast and simple. By keeping the power and control aspects in separate units, this provides greater flexibility for hire companies and cost-effective install solutions.

Sonically, the ID subs are very impressive and capable of delivering more weight than you might expect. The ID24s can't be described as 'flat', 'neutral' or 'punchy', but that's not the name of the game here. For distributing audio, particularly important vocal-rich content, they are certainly fit for purpose. The high-frequency clarity achieved by the ID24s is exceptional, and surprisingly carries for some distance too. 🎧

▶ www.nexo-sa.com