

FBT Amico 1000

A 1000W PA in a 'suitcase'? Grahame Harrison pops his luggage compartment.

The Amico 1000 is the newly released portable PA from Italian pro audio company, FBT. This mobile PA is extraordinary in that the whole box and dice – speakers, mixer, amps and even the sub – all packs neatly in on itself like a Transformer toy. One minute the unit is a PA, the next minute it's a piece of luggage ready to be wheeled away like an oversized suitcase.

The whole system (with the exception of the satellite speaker stands) is contained in one very large and chunky rack that weighs in at a substantial 40 kilos. In some ways it's difficult to see where this PA's rack ends and its individual components begin. In its 'suitcase' guise the two satellite mid-high boxes fit neatly (and securely) inside the rack itself. The power amps and the mixer are built into the rack chassis, which itself has two very durable wheels for easy transportability, and the rear of the unit is protected by a large back panel that fits very cleverly into place. The whole package looks truly amazing when its ready to travel and I couldn't wait to fire it up... and that's when I discovered the 'lid from hell'!

Lifting the Lid... Almost

The Amico 1000 has a very 'interesting' dual-purpose lid. The problem was, I couldn't for the life of me work out how to open it, and there was no manual with the unit to assist me when it first arrived. The lid acts both as a handle for dragging the unit along on its wheels (like a mobile suitcase), as well as protection

for the in-built mixer. That aspect is fine, but the protection is somewhat hampered by a hole (which is part of the handle design), and what's more, when the lid is vertical for 'towing' purposes, it provides absolutely no protection for the mixer whatsoever! An interesting design if it's raining.

When I finally did get the

lid off, the excellent internal compartmental design of this portable system was revealed. It's a fascinatingly neat little package, where no spare nook or cranny has been left unutilised. But in the end it's all very well to marvel at structural inventiveness, but what's ultimately important is, of course, how it sounds. My usual 'lab rats' (Dave Tice and Mark Evans) very generously consented yet again to a trial at my favourite pub (the Bridge Hotel at Rozelle). Unfortunately, I couldn't fit the Amico in the boot of my car with the lid closed. In the Amico's defence, my 'ride' [a 1982 Daimler Sovereign! – AS] does have a notoriously shallow boot and I can't see this being a problem for many other vehicles. However, getting the PA in and out of the car was somewhat onerous thanks the 40kg weight, but once out the integral wheels make it a doddle to drive.

The 'Components'

The two satellite speakers each have a 6.5-inch neodymium woofer (1.5-inch coils) and a one-inch HF driver with a 90° x 60° flare. But the most extraordinary feature is that the 15-inch sub-woofer is actually built into the rack itself! And what's more, it sounds great. In total you've got nearly 1,000W of power available: 600W for the sub and 150W for each satellite.

Power comes from a PWM amp for the sub and class G amps for the satellites – again, all built into the rack. The mixer is adequate with seven channels (a strange number I thought) designed for sensible flexibility. Despite the slightly confusing sales brochure, you actually have seven female XLR inputs. There are four stereo channels incorporated into the design. The mixer provides three-band EQ on each channel, monitor send, FX send, global phantom power, mute switches and an in-built FX processor with 256 presets (that don't even rate a mention in the manual). The EQ is quite nice actually, responsive and accurate. The effects do the trick and the usual facilities like Tape In and Out are also available. The knobs are all rotary (no faders) but they're smooth and responsive. Above all, the Amico 1000 is quiet as a mouse. No hums, buzzes or burps. This unit is a class act.

Meanwhile Back at The Bridge...

In situ this 'cute' little PA sounded absolutely huge, with two vocals and two (processed) acoustic guitars playing through it. Another guitar was added when master player Steve Edmonds turned up to check the unit out for a possible purchase. The vocals were



very clear and the system attracted a lot of positive unsolicited comments from punters. And the sub really does work... I was amazed at the time (and still am). I suppose I'd unconsciously figured the sub would somehow be a little on the gimmicky side, based in part on an assumed limitation of the all-in-one design, and to that end my expectations weren't high. But this was certainly not the case. The bass was clear and substantial. The Amico 1000 is a gift for the corporate market that will find its way in the world quite easily I suspect. Schools are going to love this baby! The top-of-the-range Amico 1000 is not cheap, retailing for \$5,495 (there are cheaper models), but it's well worth the money. Hire companies too would do well to give this mobile PA a serious listen.

One for All & All-in-One

I really don't believe in comparisons with separate components. There are enough cheap items around for anybody to stage an argument about individual component costs versus the price of an all-in-one PA like the Amico 1000. The old chestnut about 'this amp costs this much, and the mixer cost that much' leaves me cold. If you want to buy an individual component system, there are plenty on offer, but comparisons about the cost-effectiveness of 'kit' PAs versus

component PAs is an endless argument really with no useful outcome. It's a classic horses-for-courses scenario – what's a good PA for one person's purposes is not always appropriate for someone else. In the end, a mobile PA like the FBT is a very durable and worthwhile product that will quickly have its competitors reaching for their CAD programs. You've really got to see and hear this baby to appreciate its phenomenal potential. The sound it puts out is easily comparable to the processed alternatives that cost nearly three times as much – with the added bonus of portability. The Amico 1000 is a sensational product and once again, I'll be putting my money where my mouth is when I purchase one for my hire company. Just make sure yours comes with the manual, otherwise you may never get it open!

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