

MB QUART RCM216 Component Speaker REVIEW

BY GARRY SPRINGGAY

When it comes to component speakers, few brands enjoy the respect and admiration as MB Quart. And when they announce that they have a new 6.5 inch Reference Series component system that sells for under \$170 bucks, pretty much everyone sits up and takes notice. To see just what all the fuss was about, we asked for a set to test and evaluate. Maxxsonics Director of Marketing (and all around good guy) Chris Parvin was kind enough to send me a set of the new RCM216s. These speakers are designed to satisfy the demands of customers who want good quality sound as well as excellence in engineering and fit and finish.



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MID RANGE AND TWEETER

After unpacking the system, I look at what they mean by excellence in fit and finish. The system looks impressive, with a matte black cone highlighted by a polished aluminum phase plug and surrounding voice coil collar with a red pinstripe. The MB Quart logo is elegantly highlighted in gloss black on the face of the thermal-formed mica filled poly cone. The mid range driver is built around an ABS composite basket, chosen for its low natural resonance. Because the material is very durable and impervious to temperature extremes and corrosion, this type of basket is an excellent choice for an automotive speaker. The cone is supported on its outer top edge by a butyl rubber surround, and at the bottom a linear poly-

MEASURED TECH SPECS

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|----------------------|---------------------|
| ▶ Power Handling | 60 watts RMS |
| ▶ Crossover, Woofer | -12 dB per octave |
| ▶ Crossover, Tweeter | -12 dB per octave |
| ▶ Frequency Range | 70-18,000 Hz |
| ▶ Sensitivity | 86.3 dB/SPL @ 1W/1M |
| ▶ Nominal Impedance | 4 ohms |



cotton spider provides the required compliance and keeps the voice coil centered. Speaking of the voice coil, the RCM216s use a two-layer high temperature aluminum coil to keep moving mass low while still providing good power handling. The coil measures 25.5 mm [one inch] and is wound on a polyimide film former, known as KSV. The magnetic energy to drive the system comes from a ceramic ferrite motor assembly weighing 6.3 ounces, which surrounds a vented pole piece and transfers cool air to the coil to improve power handling and reliability.

Electrical connections consist of very sturdy spring-loaded terminals, and move to the voice coil via fully insulated woven copper tinsel leads.

The tweeter used in the RCM216 system is the familiar 30 mm inverted dome tweeter that MB Quart refers to as "WideSphere™." This dome is formed from the same grade-5 titanium alloy typically used in critical aerospace products. The tweeter uses a vented former to lower resonance, powered by a neodymium motor. Dome protection comes from an integrated grill composed of two parallel bars that cross the diameter. Because this is an inverted style dome, there is no phase plug or diffuser needed. The wires are pre-connected to the tweeter and are terminated in small female spade connectors. Interestingly, there is no wiring or terminals provided in the kit, so I assume MB Quart believes that anyone installing the system has these tiny little spades handy; I didn't, so I cut them off and connected them to bare wire.

CROSSOVER

The crossover networks that come in the RCM216 system are relatively small, which makes them easier to find a mounting location for. They have top covers that are easy to remove by pressing the sides together and pulling straight up. When snapped in place, the covers are secure and will not rattle. Mounting is accomplished via four screws, one in each corner of the base, and hidden by the top covers for a clean look. On one end of the network you'll find the input for the amplifier and the output for the woofer, with the tweeter output using four terminals on the opposite end of the housing. The four terminals provide level adjustment for the tweeter; you simply connect the negative tweeter wire to one terminal, then choose one of the remaining three for 0 dB, -3 dB, or -6 dB of tweeter output.

Components used in the crossover are good quality, inductors are a combination of air and iron cores, and a high speed mylar cap is used for the tweeter. Over-current protection comes via a self-resetting poly switch. The terminals are small, but accept a #2 Phillips screwdriver and up to about 12-gauge wire.

LISTENING

In my listening room, I set up the system with a 60 Hz high pass filter, and the output of the tweeter set to 0 dB. I settle in for a couple of hours of listening and note taking. Generally speaking, I quite enjoy the RCM216s. The mid range drivers have a pleasant sound that you could listen to all day without getting ear fatigue, and the WideSphere™ tweeters prove capable as usual, as long as you were relatively on axis. One of the problems with an inverted dome tweeter is they tend to have a narrower dispersion pattern than a convex dome,

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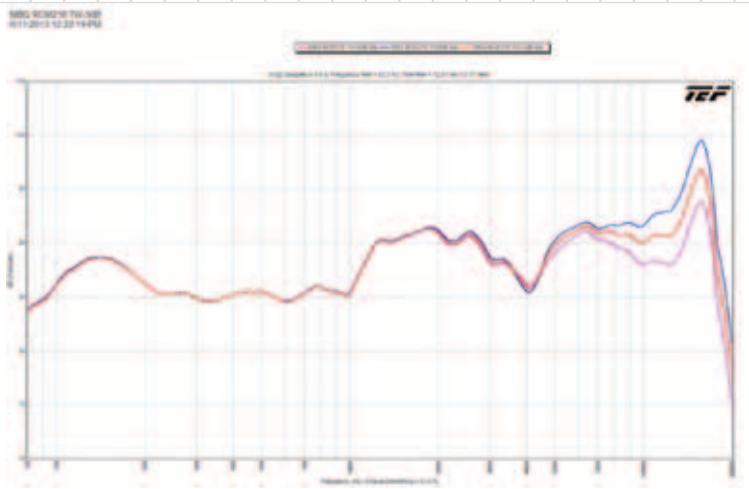


so when you install these, it's best to point them right at your head.

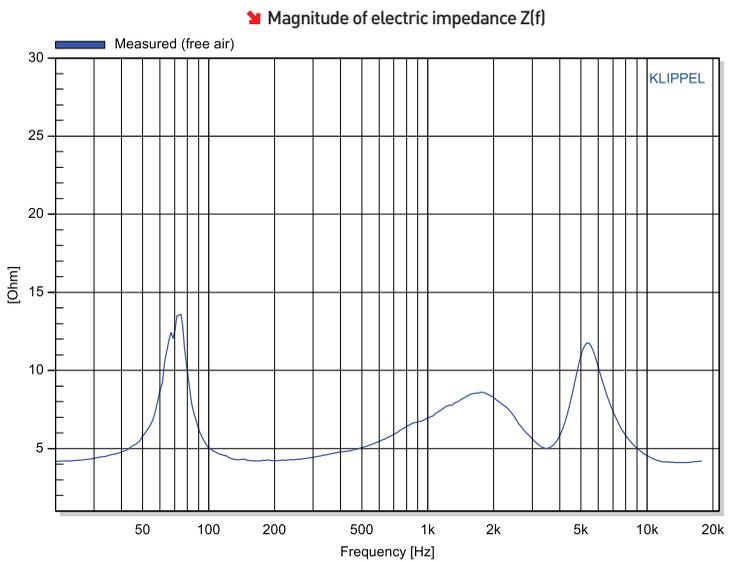
After a couple of hours of listening to a lot of different types of music and about a dozen or so of my personal reference recordings, I come away just a bit disconcerted. For example, Manhattan Transfers horn section in Four Brothers didn't have quite the brilliance that I expected, and Neil Peart's snare shots in the Rush track Red Barchetta sounded just a touch muted, without the usual "bite." The acoustic guitar in Marc Cohen's Perfect Love just didn't have the right tone, or sense of space around it.

Do these things matter to the average person driving down the street? Maybe not, but as an audiophile, they matter to me.

Maybe I'm being overly critical of a fairly inexpensive and generally well-made product, but frankly, I expect a bit more realism and accuracy from an MB Quart product. Don't get me wrong, these are still good sounding speakers, and decidedly better than a lot of similarly priced gear, but they left me wanting just a little more. Thankfully, everyone likes something a bit different, so I strongly encourage you to give these a listen for yourself. You may find they are the perfect mix of price versus performance.



MB Quart RCM216 System
FREQUENCY RESPONSE
(showing tweeter attenuation)



MB Quart RCM216 System
Impedance Response

CONCLUSION

From a typical car audio listener point of view, the MB Quart RCM216 system sounds great, with a smooth warm sound and excellent clarity. And for the \$169.99 asking price, you get performance levels that are better than what you might expect. But frankly, when a speaker says MB Quart on it, I have pretty high expectations, and this one left me wanting just a little. Then again, maybe that's exactly what the MB Quart Premium and Q Series products are for. For more information on the Reference Series and all of the other MB Quart gear, check them out online at www.mbquart.com. *PAS*



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