

JL Audio C5 653

Component Review



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**JL Audio
 knocks another
 one out of the
 park with bril-
 liant design and
 power delivery.**

**QUICK
 SPECS**

Recommended Power	75 Watts
Sensitivity (2 V/1 M)	89 dB SPL
Frequency Response	50 Hz -25k Hz (-3 dB)
Mounting Depth (approx)	2.54 in. (65 mm)

Any avid car audio enthusiast knows that the choice of loudspeakers for your system is perhaps the single most critical decision of the system design. It's a well-known fact that the speakers you choose make more difference in the final sound of the car than any other component. For anyone who is looking for true high fidelity loudspeakers, the JL Audio brand is almost always near the top of the list. What began way back in the 1970s as a fun hobby for Jim Birch and Lucio Proni (JL Audio, get it?), grew into one of the world's most respected audio companies.

While there are a lot of two-way component systems available, we are going to have a look this time at something a bit different: a three-way component system for your car. The JL C5-653

component system is designed for all high-performance audio enthusiasts who have the locations available for a 6.5-inch subwoofer, a four-inch midrange and a sweet silk dome tweeter.

FEATURES and CONSTRUCTION

One of the advantages of a three-way system is the ability to allow the 6.5-inch woofer to be an actual woofer, and not have to compromise it to also cover the upper midrange. In this way, the woofer can be designed for long excursion and improved dynamic performance.

When designing a high-end loudspeaker, it is critical that the mass and compliance specifications are very accurate and consistent from one speaker to the next. For those reasons, the C5-653 system employs cones and suspen-

sion components for the woofer and midrange drivers from famed supplier, Dr. Kurt Müller. Müller's legendary low-mass cones and butyl rubber surrounds are inherently well damped and allow a less complicated crossover design, which in turn translates into more natural sound. This type of quality doesn't come cheap, but JL Audio and many of the world's leading home audio companies believe it's money well spent. The woofers use cast aluminum baskets and benefit from JL's patented Elevated Frame Cooling technology, which uses the spider to pump air directly on the windings of the two-layer copper voice coil. High energy strontium ferrite is used for the magnetic materials in both the woofer and the midrange drivers.

The four-inch midranges are designed to fit in multiple locations thanks to break-away-style mounting tabs. A nice spacer ring is also provided to prevent the tabs from bending when the speaker is mounted using all four tabs. There has been a considerable amount of thought and installer experi-

ence put into how these speakers mount, and it definitely shows. The lightweight Kurt Müller cones are mineral-filled polypropylene with a curvilinear shape.

The tweeter used in the C5-653 system is an edge-driven 19-mm [0.75-inch] silk dome unit, chosen for its smooth character and overall high-frequency balance. It uses Ferrofluid for improved cooling and is powered by a neodymium motor. The tweeter features a nicely engineered surface and flush-mount mounting fixtures to accommodate any application.

The passive crossover network supplied with the system is yet another bit of cleverly done engineering. Certainly at this level of performance one expects Mylar capacitors and air core inductors, and yes, those are all in place in the critical locations. What really makes this crossover different, however, is the adjustability it can provide. This is where JL Audio's vast installation experience and understanding of vehicle acoustics comes into play. There are four levels of tweeter output available and three levels of midrange presence adjustment. The installer's ability of tuning these crossovers to suit the installation and speaker locations goes a long way to delivering the best possible sound for the dollars invested.

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LISTENING

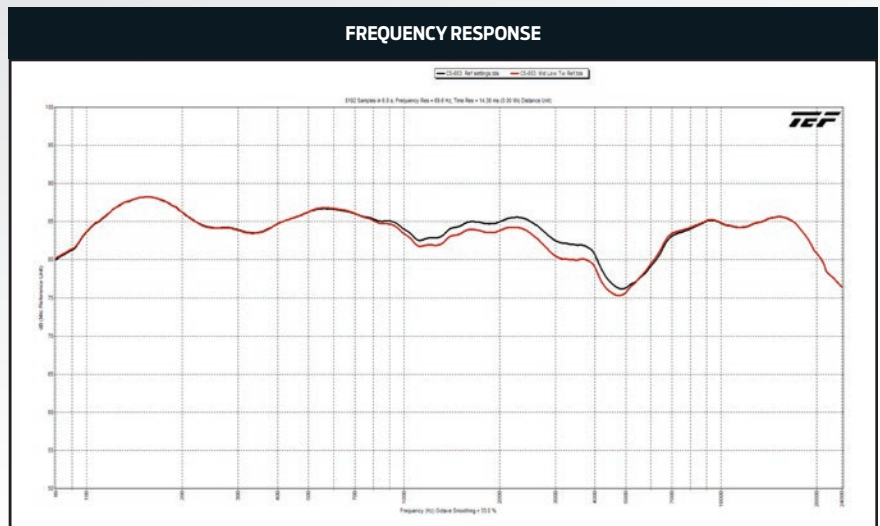
After building a new set of three-way baffles for my listening room's comparator, I mounted the C5-653 system with the centers of the woofer, mid, and tweeter on a straight vertical line, keeping the three drivers as close together as possible on the baffle. I then set the crossovers to the indicated reference positions, adjusted the amplifier for a full-range signal, and began a very enjoyable listening session. I experimented with a variety of crossover setting positions, finally settling on what I thought was the best sounding settings for my specific situation. One of my habits when evaluating the sound of something is to make notes as I listen. Looking back at my notes as I write this review are the words: "natural," "smooth," and "pleasant."

The C5-653 system sounds very good, regardless of the musical genre and listening level. Bass output is strong without being overbearing, and the midrange has a natural, smooth timbre. On a few tracks, like the brilliant acoustic guitar in Stanley Myers' Cavatina, I found myself wishing for a little bit more top end detail, but overall it's very good. This track was recorded in a mission at San Juan Capistrano, and if you have not heard it reproduced on a good system, you owe it to yourself to track it down and give it a listen. Simply stunning acoustics!

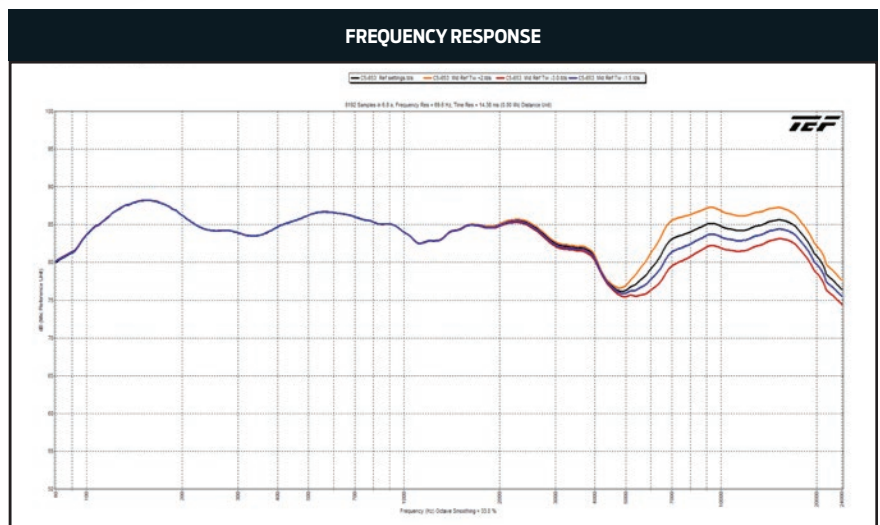
Moving onto other tunes, the bottom end is strong and full, with good definition and detail. Plucked bass strings in Glen Miller's Little Brown Jug sound full and vibrant. The drums and snare are very articulate and well-controlled, even at fairly high volume levels. Even when driven pretty hard, the system never got edgy or harsh sounding, and had some of the most articulate midrange I've heard in a while from a car audio speaker. The top end was always clean and sweet sounding with absolutely no edge or brittleness. I'd bet this system would make a pretty darn good bookshelf system for your home with the right cabinets. I know it sounds better than some of the name brand home stuff I hear in the stores.

CONCLUSION

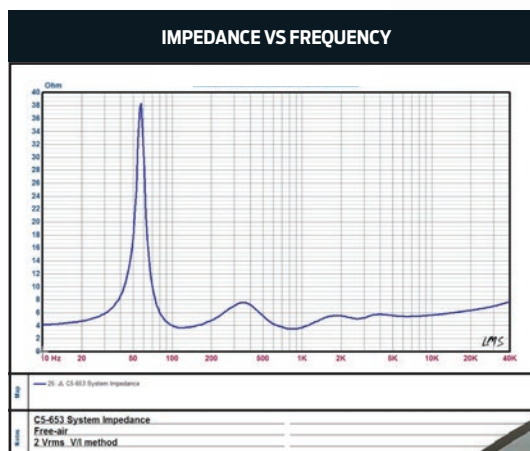
At the end of the day, the JL Audio C5-653 component system proved to be a very capable, well thought out, and brilliantly executed speaker system. From the expertly crafted components, to the installation friendly mounting options, and the wonderfully adjustable crossover, there simply isn't much not to like. The system is easily worth every penny of the \$799.99 [U.S.] MSRP. You don't have to take my word for it; just drop into your local JL Audio dealer and audition the system for yourself! **PAS**



Tweeter Levels



Midrange Presence Adjustment Example



System Impedance - Free Air

