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Reviews: 6.5" Two Way Components Review Under \$600

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If you've read my recent review of component speakers under \$300 you'll know that you can get some great sounding sets for bargain prices these days. Now it's time to step up to the next level in performance, with component sets costing up to \$600RRP.



Here we have sets priced between \$399 and \$599, and while this may seem like quite a disparity, for many companies \$399 is considered 'high-end', whereas for other companies \$599 is considered 'entry-level'. Given this, the review needed to span these price points to crossover between the upper level of brands like JVC and Vibe and the lower level of the likes of Audison. This certainly makes for some interesting comparisons between sets as you'll soon find out.

While purists will quite rightly argue that any good component speaker set should be biased towards 'sound quality', it is also somewhat true that quality of sound is a subjective thing, and this explains why there's such a variance in the sound characteristics of each speaker set in this review. While some of these sets achieved what I'd consider to a well balanced and natural delivery, others were accentuated or 'flavoured' in distinct ways that I think many buyers may prefer. So, just because I may prefer a specific set doesn't mean you may not prefer another set's sound characteristics as they may suit your listening preferences better.

Time to unbox some speakers and get testing ...

Model: Morel Dotech Ovation 6



RRP: \$568

- [Contact: www.morelhif.com](http://www.morelhif.com)
- Power handling: 140WRMS
- Sensitivity: 90dB

Woofers design

- Diameter: 165mm
- Cone material: Treated Paper
- Basket material: Pressed steel

Tweeter design

- Diameter: 28mm
- Dome material: Soft dome
- Mounting: Flush, Angled surface, Angled pod

Crossover

- Slope: 3.2kHz 6dB/oct.
- Tweeter attenuation: +3, 0, -3dB

COMMENTS

Israeli company Morel is a specialist speaker manufacturer that is rightly proud of their creations. The Dotech Ovation 6 are the most affordable 6.5-inch component set to include Morel's 'Hexatech' aluminium voice coils in the construction of the midrange drivers. That means that the wires used to wind each voice coil is hexagonal in cross-section, and therefore when layered it provides greater copper for any given area. Furthermore, the voice coils themselves are much larger in diameter than usual. Somehow Morel have been able to achieve this while creating a much narrower structure from behind, and even though you'd swear they featured neodymium magnets given their narrowness there are in fact ferrite magnets used on the drivers. The larger Hexatech voice coils, it seems, allow such a construction. This means that the midrange drivers are very easy to install, aided by their slim pressed steel frames.

There's nothing more exotic than paper used for the cones, which is fine by me. The speaker grilles are worth mentioning, coming in singular pressed steel with large circular holes in them as opposed to being stamped mesh that you'd normally get. That makes them pretty cool to look at in my book.

Morel states that the passive filter networks feature 6dB per octave filter slopes but I could clearly see two choke coils and a capacitor which tells me that one of the slopes is 12dB per octave – probably the HP for the tweeter. Rightly enough too, since a shallow 6dB per octave filter slope and a lowish 3.2kHz cut frequency would rob the 28mm tweeters of power handling. The crossovers are traditional Morel half-egg shaped and nicely compact, though moisture can easily get inside so keep this in mind during installation.

Morel uses the same basic tweeter style throughout their range from these Dotech Ovation 6 set all the way up to the \$2356 per pair Supremo 6 models. The 'MT12' shares similar 28mm soft Acuflex coated domes to the ultra exotic Supremo 6, and even boasts a Resonant Frequency (F_s) of an amazingly low 950Hz that endows them with the ability to play an extremely wide bandwidth. Morel claim usable response down to 1800Hz! The supplied fitting kits are pretty handy too, with traditional surface mount angled pods that can mount in shallow or sharp angles, a funky oval shaped flush mount style, plus a larger angled surface pod that the flush fitting clips into.

AUDITION

Sitting back to listen through my standard slew of evaluation tracks I found it extremely difficult to criticize anything I heard from this obviously well designed and engineered set of speakers from Morel. This is a pretty darn flawless sounding pair of speakers.

Tonal balance between treble, midrange and mid bass was a stand out, and this is a set that could happily be used without aid of a subwoofer if required as the foundation afforded by the bass performance is decently fulsome. The midrange, too, was exceptionally clear, pronounced and articulate. This is one area that 6.5-inch component sets tend to suffer from and is shown up by a lack of bite with heavy guitar riffs. Not so here, and there was an added richness to vocals that made listening to the Ovation set all the more enjoyable.

I think that 'enjoyable' is the best way to describe the difference between the sound of the Morels to the Hertz and Audison sets. Both those rivals are lovely to listen to in a clinical kind of way, yet the Morels just have a musical timbre to them that made them a sheer joy to listen to with any kind of music I threw at them. Maybe this was due to the treble response of the 28mm tweeters, which was not as abruptly revealing as either Hertz or Audison while still appearing very detailed and 'liquid' in their sonic character. Whatever it was, I loved it.

VERDICT

After the Maximo 6 set had scored so well in the subjective testing of our 'Under \$300' category I had high expectations for the Dotech Ovation set's sonic performance, especially given they sell for two and a half times the price. Happily, I wasn't disappointed, and after totaling up the scores found that the Dotech Ovarations had achieved a narrow one point victory over the equally impressive sets from Audison, DLS and Vibe.

Model: Audison Voce AV K6

- RRP: \$599
- Contact

- Power handling: 125WRMS
- Sensitivity: 91dB

Woofer design

- Diameter: 165mm
- Cone material: Cotton fibre
- Basket material: Cast Alloy

Tweeter design

- Diameter: 28mm
- Dome material: Tetelon
- Mounting: OEM, Angled pod

Crossover

- Slope: 2.5kHz 12dB/oct.
- Tweeter attenuation:

COMMENTS

Audison's Voce AV K6 components are a new design from the famous Italian speaker company that share quite a few design cues with their illustrious and rather more expensive Thesis brethren. They also share commonalities with the Hertz HSK 165 set reviewed further on. At \$599RRP they are slightly pricier than the Hertz set and the most expensive set in this review, yet when compared to the \$4300 per pair Thesis models they can be considered a bargain since you're getting something in the order of 90% of the performance for a less than 15% of the cost. It's all how you look at it.

The Voce AV K6 set is certainly beautiful to behold, and from every angle each and every component is exquisitely manufactured. Starting with the tweeters, you get a pair of very large 28mm Tetelon domes affording the ability to play half an octave lower than smaller designs (down to 2.5kHz), with the primary benefit being a raised sound stage when placed high on the dash. The trade off for this is slightly more difficult installation, and these tweeters simply won't slot into many OEM tweeter locations in places like sail panels without custom intervention. The mounting kits are decent, offering OEM brackets and angled surface mount cups offering two varying angles.

The passive networks are a little fiddly to use, requiring the lids to be removed (which itself is finicky) to access connections and for mounting. Internally all is very neat with high grade components and a three level +2, 0 or -2dB level settings for the tweeters.

The midrange drivers look similar in architecture to the Hertz HSK 165 versions, even sharing the same shaped 'V-Cone' arrangement with the inverted dust cap. The Voce versions, however, feature rippled edge surrounds and a different textured finish to their cones – even though they're claimed to be constructed of the identical cotton fibre material. Terminating the wires connections are insert terminals with Phillips type grub screws.

AUDITION

It's hard to explain in words, but the Audison set simply takes the same tonal approach as the Hertz set but focuses it with greater clarity. It just all falls together with a modicum of greater cohesion – almost as if you've applied EQ to the Hertz set but without actually doing so. I think maybe the lower crossover point (2.5kHz Audison versus 3.3kHz Hertz) may have something to do with this, whereby the lower treble/upper midrange has been smoothed. The tweeter level required to achieve this balance was actually set at a 2dB higher level compared to the Hertz set as well. Mind you, even with back-to-back critical listening there's really not much between these two sets, and any differences I'm describing is really splitting hairs.

The treble reproduction from the 28mm Tetelon domes really is ultra revealing, even to the point of being uncomfortably so - which is actually bad news if you listen to compressed media files. This set yearns for the full and uncompressed recording, and will very quickly show up low bit-rate files for their shortcomings – especially in the highest vocal registers and with crash cymbals.

The corollary is that this revealing nature is truly sublime when it comes to well recorded songs featuring highly defined image placement and good dynamic range. Compared to lesser sets the Audison Voce AV K6 set sounds as if an invisible veil of transparency has been removed, revealing nuances and details that shimmer and burst into life. Oh yes!

The only shy factor is the mid bass weight and authority. It is defined and controlled, but there's simply not enough gusto there for my liking. Add a subwoofer and things will improve for the better, and I can only think the modest 3mm Xmax offered by this set (4mm from the Hertz) is partly to blame for this. Given both sets exhibit this trait I think maybe this was the tonal balance goal they set out to achieve.



If you like your speakers to sound ultra revealing to the point that every tiny nuance is clearly evident then the Audison Voce AV K6 set will take your breath away. The added \$100 over the twinned Hertz set does provide tangible build improvements but at the cost of slightly more difficult installation. The sonic benefits of the larger tweeters would be good reason to spend the extra cash too, since they'll pay off with improved sound stage height.

Model: DLS RS6

- RRP: \$399
- Contact

- Power handling: 50WRMS
- Sensitivity: 92dB

Woofers design

- Diameter: 165mm
- Cone material: Polypropylene
- Basket material: Pressed steel

Tweeter design

- Diameter: 25mm
- Dome material: Silk
- Mounting: Flush, angled surface

Crossover

- Slope: 5kHz 6/12dB/oct.
- Tweeter attenuation: Hi or Lo for mid and tweeter

COMMENTS

Next up we have the DLS RS6 component set from Sweden. There are actually two versions of this set, the RS6 and the RS6A. The only difference is that the RS6A set features passive filter networks that have individual boxes for the high and low pass stages, and while this allows easier fitment and wiring when the midrange and tweeter are not mounted into the same structure (like a door cavity) it does add \$100 to the RRP. Given this, we reckon the RS6 set with the single passive network box per side is a smarter option at \$399RRP.

From outward appearances the DLS RS6 set are very understated. There's no flashiness to speak of, just a pair of elegant midrange drivers using silver pressed steel frames and featuring classic paper cones with rubber edge surrounds. You'd be excused for thinking paper is a strange material for making speakers out of but in truth it's always been the preferred choice for great sound quality. Polypropylene has only become popular due to its ability to be fashioned into funky shapes and colours – not because it has tangible sonic benefits.

The tweeters, likewise, are fuss free in design and are built to adhere to traditional guidelines being silk dome and 25mm in diameter. They're still very compact and come with flush and angled surface mounting

cups. The passive networks use high grade internal components offering 6dB low pass and 12dB high pass filter slopes, while individual levels can be set at 'Hi' or 'Lo' for either speaker using small internal jumpers. This essentially affords three levels of variance (same level, mid higher, or tweeter higher), though DLS do not state the variance in output for each stage.

AUDITION

I've heard numerous DLS component sets over the years and I can gladly say that the RS6 set shares the family traits I've always known and enjoyed, these being impressively linear tonal balance throughout the sonic spectrum combined with excellent musicality. Of note is the revealing midrange detail, which I'm sure is a byproduct of the paper midrange cones. Meanwhile, the bass lines portrayed are defined and clear with good authority. With the 25mm tweeters set to an equivalent output level to that of the midrange drivers the treble response can be very forward, and I found the best balance when they were set 'Lo' while the midrange drivers were set to 'Hi' on the crossovers. The nature of these speakers also lends themselves very well to low fatigue during extended or higher volume listening levels.

VERDICT

If you can look past the plain Jane appearance of the DLS RS6 component set and simply sit back in listen to them you'll agree with me that these are some of the finest speakers on offer for the money. DLS have focused solely on creating a budget minded speaker set that will satisfy even the most fussy of buyers, and in the RS6 set they've succeeded in this goal amicably.

Model: German Maestro CS 6508

- RRP: \$399
- [Contact](#)

- Power handling: 50WRMS
- Sensitivity: 87dB

Woofer design

- Diameter: 165mm
- Cone material: Polypropylene
- Basket material: ABS plastic

Tweeter design

- Diameter: 30mm
- Dome material: Titanium
- Mounting: Flat surface or Flush

Crossover

- Slope: 5.5kHz 6dB LP/HP
- Tweeter attenuation: 0, -3, -6dB

COMMENTS

To the uninitiated, the German Maestro brand is for all intents and purposes a rebirth of the famous MB Quart brand whose speakers once dominated car audio competition worldwide during the hey days of our scene between 1990 and 2000. I am familiar with MB Quart, having run their QM335.02CX 3-way set in my car back in the '90s, so was very keen to hear what German Maestro has done to evolve this brand for a new audience.

First of all, the CS 6508 are handmade in Germany, and I must say they are particularly well fabricated while featuring the most intricate and well designed fitting kit of this group. There are many design traits that were unique to the MB Quart speakers that have been carried over, like the cast plastic midrange frames, press-in style understated steel mesh grilles, and the surface and flush mount tweeter kits. Likewise the midrange drivers use simple black polypropylene cones with rubber edge surrounds. The tweeters, meanwhile, have evolved from the classic QM design of yesteryear to the new MegaSphere inverted dome design. Their diameter has grown substantially, and whereas the much-loved QM218.03CX component set that won so many accolades in the '90s featured a small 19mm tweeter, this new version is far larger at 30mm in diameter.

The passive crossover network has grown in physical size but has reduced internal components of higher quality. There are what appear to be 6dB per octave filter slopes with a stated 5.5kHz cut frequency, and the tweeter outputs have the choice of 0, -3 and -6dB level setting comparative to the midrange.

AUDITION

Sitting back to sample my select tracks with the German Maestro CS 6508 set was almost like a trip down memory lane. These speakers share the very same sonic signature of the MB Quart speakers I've known and loved for decades, which is no surprise given their origins. The overall sound is vibrant and lively, with the titanium tweeters serving up an airy quality that gives an expansive feel to the sound stage. I also think that the larger 30mm diameter MegaSphere tweeter are an improvement on the older 19mm models in being less fatiguing and more balanced overall.

The midrange response is slightly recessed in the mix with these speakers, and this is in no doubt due to the nature of the tweeters combined with the excellent and quite emphasized mid bass presence. Indeed, you could happily use this set without the aid of a subwoofer and still achieve very good results. The authority and resolution of the lower octaves is such that it causes vocals to sound chesty and more fulsome than normal, though never in an unpleasant manner.

VERDICT

With so many brands opting for soft dome tweeters these days it is refreshing to still see the Germans resolutely loyal to the titanium tweeter construction. This affords the German Maestro with a sonic signature that isn't replicated elsewhere, and one which is immediately enjoyable with all styles of music. The overall tonality is very nice and quite natural with acoustic music, but there's also a hint of colouration there that makes these speakers especially suitable to harder edged music styles like rock. If you're a prior user of the MB Quart QM range then you'll love the CS 6508 because they sound very similar, yet with improved treble linearity.

Of greatest note is the price, and considering that these retail for \$399 while still being made in Germany is quite a feat given the older models (of arguably lesser quality) sold for closer to \$600RRP a decade ago. That's progress and competition for you.

Model: Hertz HSK 165

- RRP: \$499
- [Contact](#)

- Power handling: 125WRMS
- Sensitivity: 92dB

Woofers design

- Diameter: 165mm
- Cone material: Non pressed paper with cotton fibre
- Basket material: Cast alloy

Tweeter design

- Diameter: 25mm
- Dome material: Tetolon fiber
- Mounting: OEM, Flush, Angled pod

Crossover

- Slope: 3.2kHz 12dB/oct.
- Tweeter attenuation:

COMMENTS

Hertz and Audison don't hide that fact that they're sister companies, and when you compare the Hertz HSK 165 component set with its \$100 pricier rival Audison Voce AV K6 there are definite family resemblances. So similar are they, that I wouldn't be surprised if they weren't developed simultaneously and, frankly, with each other in mind. I'd also be surprised if they were sold through identical dealers, and I'd expect Hertz to be carried by rival dealers to Audison to save confusion.

Why is the HKS 165 the set cheaper of the two? Well, that's down to the use of smaller (yet by no means small) 25mm Tetolon dome tweeters, which thereby merits a higher 3.3kHz intersect frequency with a 12dB per octave filter slope. The HKS 165 set shares the AV K6's excellent build quality, but small aspects like spade terminals on the midrange drivers and slightly lower grade (but not low grade) components are used in the passive filtering networks. These also feature the same -2, 0 and +2dB level settings for the tweeter outputs as the Audison set.

Curiously, Hertz have succumb to the use of dubious power handling boasts, with '250W' printed no less than six times around the box (yet only three times on the Audison's, but you can read into that what you will about their target audiences). Still, the more accurately rated 125WRMS is also very high and I dare say this makes allowances for a suitable high pass filter of 80Hz or thereabouts. I certainly wouldn't put 125WRMS through them at 50Hz.

Regardless, these are a very tasty set of speakers, and the midrange drivers are especially nice to behold. The cones are made from a interwoven non-pressed paper and cotton fibre, featuring Hertz's trade mark 'V-Cone' shape that is finished with a unique pinpoint inverted dust cap.

AUDITION

From the moment I powered the Hertz HSK 165 set into life they served up a wonderfully revealing and transparent delivery of upper midrange and treble. Acoustic guitar sounding intricate and refined, with each individual string pluck clearly apparent while strummed chords sang with body and resonance.

The Tetolon tweeters were some of the most revealing I have ever heard, adding airiness and extension to the 'room' yet without adding anything brittle or harsh to the sound – which is very hard to achieve. Using the variable level settings on the crossovers I toyed with the three positions and settled on the middle '0dB' setting, which in reality has -2dB knocked off it if you think about it – I mean, the passive filter can't amplify the speakers by +2dB on that setting now can they?

On the bass delivery front the drums and bass guitar were taught and controlled, but to my mind a little cold and lacking in weight. I trialed the set when aided with a subwoofer system and things improved dramatically, so by all means add a dedicated sub bass driver if you want the best from this set. Of note is the optional HSK 165XL.4 set that features larger 28mm tweeters and, critically, beefier mid bass drivers capable of double the excursion (8mm over 4mm) that will no doubt remedy the low end shortfall. At \$699, however, they're \$200 pricier and \$100 out of this review's range.

VERDICT

This set obviously shares the same technology, engineering, build quality and for the most part the excellent overall sound quality of 'rival' Audison Voce AV K6 set. They therefore must be considered as the most affordable way into the range of Hertz/Audison speakers which do seem to crossover in design and philosophy quite heavily. If you're the type of ultra-fussy buyer who simply must have the most revealing speakers but have a strictly lower budget then team the Hertz HKS 165 set with a decent subwoofer (Hertz make a matching variety!) and I promise you that you'll be massively impressed.

Model: JVC CS-ARS650

- RRP: \$399
- [Contact](#)

- Power handling: 80WRMS
- Sensitivity: 87dB

Woofer design

- Diameter: 165mm
- Cone material: Paper/Glass Fiber Hemp
- Basket material: Cast alloy

Tweeter design

- Diameter: 25mm
- Dome material: Titanium
- Mounting: Flush & Flat surface

Crossover

- Slope: 4kHz 12dB/Oct.
- Tweeter attenuation: 0, -3, -6dB

COMMENTS

If you saw a pair of JVC's CS-ARS650 component set on a demo board in a car audio store you probably wouldn't recognize them since there's no mention of JVC anywhere to be seen from a front-on viewing angle. Nope, they've eschewed the parent company's brand in lieu of the 'Arsenal' brand. Much like Toyota and Nissan have done with Lexus and Infinity, JVC believes it needs a whole new identity to sell higher priced items. Maybe they're right, I don't know.

What I do know is that the CS-ARS650 is a very impressively built component set that is well worth their \$399RRP. The midrange speakers come in for particular praise for being beautifully crafted, with bespoke cast alloy frames housing small neodymium magnets that allow for easier installation in tight confines. The cones are a gloriously stiff and light combination of what JVC calls Glass Fiber and hemp, but there's also a layer of paper on their rear sides. At their centres are unique finned phase plugs that not only look cool but may even assist in cooling. The speaker terminals are equally impressive, providing chunky tabs for spade plugs or screw down terminals for a more secure connection.

JVC opted for titanium domes when designing the tweeters for this set, which carries over from their previous higher end designs. The domes are 25mm in diameter and come fitted to flat surface mounting pods that clip into flush fitted steel mounting rings for a shallower finish. No angled pods are provided but the tweeters do swivel and angle within their mounts.

The passive filtering networks are very interesting, and while small they house good quality internal components and ample level attenuation of 0, -3 and -6dB. In addition, a small pair of terminals allows connection to 12V direct power and earth to illuminated two small blue LEDs inside, while there are both poly switch and light bulb overload protection circuits added. It's also worth noting that JVC scores extra marks for providing a DIN mounting rings for the midrange as well as a generous amount of speaker wire to aid connection.

AUDITION

I began the audition of the CS-ARS650 set with the tweeter connected in the 0 level setting but it was immediately apparent that their output was way too hot compared to the midrange, prompting a quick swap of the jumpers to the -6dB position. Now, with a far more balance tonal spread, I could sit back and enjoy some tunes. The first thing that struck me was the nicely taught and controlled upper bass delivery of the midrange drivers, which was complimented by equally stellar midrange clarity and fluency. The very lowest octaves aren't so well resolved, making the CS-ARS650 a candidate to be teamed with a subwoofer system.

The treble's sonic signature really stamped its authority on this set, governing the overall sound markedly. Being large diameter and titanium in construction means they afford very high extension (JVC quotes up to 32kHz) and this in turn gives the set an expansive sound. At lower volumes this keeps the set sounding bright and lively, while at higher volumes you get great dynamics. Still, metal domes tend to have a slightly shrill tone to them that's unmistakable, and on this set this is especially evident on female vocals and cymbals where they can sound a little thin and spitty. They don't have the finesse of the German Maestro's titanium tweeters, for example. All in all though, they're a great sounding set of speakers.

VERDICT

JVC have come a long way with the new Arsenal CS-ARS650 speaker set over previous designs, showing that their engineers have an ever-increasing understanding of what it takes to manufacture not only great looking but great sounding speakers. The CS-ARS650 achieves both these goals exceedingly well. If you like a hotter overall treble balance with your sound you'll like this speaker set a lot.

Model: Polk MM6501

- RRP: \$499
- Contact

- Power handling: 125WRMS
- Sensitivity: 94dB

Woofers design

- Diameter: 165mm
- Cone material: Woven Glass Composite
- Basket material: Carbon Composite

Tweeter design

- Diameter: 25mm
- Dome material: Soft dome
- Mounting: Flush or Flat surface

Crossover

- Slope: Not stated
- Tweeter attenuation: 0 or -3dB

COMMENTS

There are more than one interesting design aspects to Polk's MM6501 component speakers. For a kick off they're designed and marketed as also being 'Marine Certified', which means that their construction will not only stand the rigors of the harsh automotive environment but even that of the harsher marine environment. This is done through use of composite materials like that of the midrange drivers' baskets, and the cones which are said to be 'Woven Glass Composite'. The weave is so tight as to certainly be water resistant, which is a good thing since most woven cones I've come across would leak water like a sieve!

Then there is the neodymium magnets used in the midrange drivers. This not only makes them compact to keep out of harm's way but makes installation a lot easier. Funny, it used to be that to sell an American brand of 6.5-inch components for this kind of money meant the midrange drivers had to have magnets the size of your fists. How times have changed, but that's a maturing market for you.

The tweeters are 25mm units that are housed in silver casing, and even the domes themselves are treated to appear silver. At a glance they look like titanium domes but they're silk, and I have to wonder if that's intentional to attract a certain type of buyer? You get a choice of flat surface or flush mounting pods, but no angled set. The tweeters do kind of swivel in their mounts but not by much.

Polk doesn't mention the type of filter slopes or cut off frequencies provided by the passive filtering networks. Popping of the lids off reveals half decent innards, plus dual capacitors used on the tweeter which suggests a steep 18dB per octave filter slope is employed. I also spot a tiny polyswitch for protection, while a simple two way toggle selects either zero or -03dB tweeter attenuation.

Finally, Polk state this set as offering a 2.7ohm impedance load, while sensitivity is stated as 94dB. Technically speaking, the 2.7ohms impedance means you'll only need to buy an amplifier 2/3rd the power to get the same SPL, since the lower load will allow most stereo amplifiers to make a few dB more watts. This (and the very high 94dB sensitivity) also has the side effect of allowing the MM6501 set to stick out on a

demo board which compared to regular 4ohm speakers. Keep this in mind during back to back comparisons in store.

AUDITION

Now here's a set that's been designed with true full range duties in mind. While not able to generate huge SPL (hey, they're only 6.5-inch diameter pistons after all), there's still some genuine bottom octave bass output on offer from the Polk MM6501 set. Indeed, if you simply don't want or can't merit a subwoofer in the system these should definitely be on the audition list.

Treble response was bright and lively with good articulation and relatively low colouration on string instruments and the upper vocal registers. Likewise I found the midrange equally listenable, though neither frequency band offered the sheer finesse of other sets here. In solace the Polk MM6501 are a very enjoyable set to listen to, and its only when critically compared to other sets that deficiencies show up.

This manifests as lesser resolution in creating the sonic 'picture'. Here's an analogy that might help. The Polk MM6501 is like watching a standard definition movie, whereas the Morel Dotech Ovation is like watching a High Definition movie. It's all there with the Polk set - just not as clear. Meanwhile, the Audison AV K6 set is like watching the full blown 1080P experience – which is amazing for many people but often a bit too much for some. Get my drift?

VERDICT

I chalk the sound of this set down to what happens when you target the average American youth with the sonic characteristics, and the Polk set is highly efficient, will suck lots of power from your amplifier thanks to their 2.7ohm impedance, and sound loud'n'proud if a little unsophisticated. They're more a 'Chevy Camaro' than a 'BMW M3', but that makes them tons of fun for a lot of people.

Model: Vibe Lite Air 6

- RRP: \$399
- Contact

- Power handling: 100WRMS
- Sensitivity: 84dB

Woofer design

- Diameter: 165mm
- Cone material: Kevlar
- Basket material: Cast alloy

Tweeter design

- Diameter: 20mm
- Dome material: Silk
- Mounting: Flush, Flat or Angle Surface

Crossover

- Slope: 6dB/oct.
- Tweeter attenuation: None

COMMENTS

The Vibe Audio lite air 6 component set were the feature of an individual review published back in February, but since this review was conducted the distributors have changed hands which has seen their price reduced considerably to \$399. If you've read the individual review you'll know that the old price was my single gripe, and since I still had the test set on hand I thought they'd be a perfect addition to this group.

From a build quality perspective the lite air 6 are probably the most unique and 'bespoke' of these sets, and the midrange drivers are incredibly shallow thanks to the use of tiny neodymium magnets and impressively detailer cast alloy frames. The cones are a heavily woven Kevlar bonded to a rubber edge surround, with the fixed dust cap through which the actual voice coil can be seen. To finish them off you get a pair of cast alloy finishing rings that can be mounted either with or without supplied steel mesh inserts.

Likewise, the tweeters come housed in cast alloy surrounds. These can be fitted into your choice of flush, surface or angled pods. The tweeter domes are 20mm in diameter and made from silk. In keeping with the light weight theme the passive filters are a small in-line type, and while Vibe's website claims 12dB per octave high and low pass slopes the PCB arrangement and use of single choke and capacitor says 6dB per octave in truth.

AUDITION

I'm glad to say that I was spot on with my original thoughts on these speakers in the prior review, as often back-to-back comparison can skew your impressions. The Vibe lite air 6 set sound every bit as natural, neutral, balanced and resolved as I'd heard the first time around. This is a set of speakers that really flatters any kind of music you throw at them. At any volume level they simply respond with definition and clarity, allowing each instrument and performer in the mix to be clearly placed.

An ample serve of bass presence and control is joined by nicely resolved midrange. I think that the shallow low pass filter assists here, allowing the midrange to blend with the tweeters perfectly. Often I normally find smaller 20mm domes to suffer from 'treble shrinkage' – which they portray certain upper frequencies in a thinner manner. Not so here, as the lite air 6 silk domes did a superb job of replicating every nuance as it should be. The overall tonal balance was also exemplary.

VERDICT

No matter which way you cut it the Vibe lite air 6 are an excellent pair of speakers that are outstanding value at \$399. They combine cutting edge engineering and design with awesome build quality, plus they're incredible light, versatile and easy to install. They also just so happen to be some of the very best sounding speakers around, serving up the type of sonic performance that both purists and non-purists will enjoy equally.

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Brand Model	Audison AV K6	DLS RS6	German Maestro CS6508	Hertz HSK165	JVC Arsenal CS-ARS650	Morel Dotech	Polk MM6501	Vibe Lite Air 6
Subjective Evaluation								
Treble (/20)	17	16	16	16	14	17	15	17
Midrange (/20)	17	17	14	17	15	18	15	16
Mid Bass (/20)	16	17	18	16	15	17	18	16
Linearity (/20)	17	18	16	16	14	17	15	18
SPL (/20)	18	17	18	17	17	17	15	18
Sound Quality Total (/100)	85	85	82	82	75	86	78	85
Build Quality & Features								
Tweeter Attenuation (/10)	10	10	10	10	10	10	5	0
Mounting Kit (/10)	8	6	7	8	8	8	9	7
Ease of Installation (/10)	7	8	8	8	9	9	9	9
Build Quality (/20)	18	15	16	16	17	16	14	18
Build Total (/50)	43	39	41	42	44	43	37	34
OVERALL TOTAL	128	124	123	124	119	129	116	119
Recommended Retail Price:	\$599	\$399	\$399	\$499	\$399	\$568	\$499	\$399

CONCLUSION

Arriving at a final result is tricky. As is clear, the Morel Dotech Ovation set scored the highest overall marks, yet they were just one solitary point ahead of the equally impressive Audison Voce AV K6 set. Both sets, mind you, cost \$100 more than Hertz's HSK 165s and a considerable \$200 more than DLS's \$399RRP RS6 – both of which scored just a few points less.

So, while the points victory is shared between Morel and Audison, the value for money victory should be given to the DLS and Hertz. Then there's Vibe's lite air 6 set, which only lost out on scoring an equivalent amount to the Morel set due to losing 10 points for not having tweeter attenuation. Certainly, if you find you don't require this feature the Vibe set all of a sudden makes the most sense.

I would ultimately place these speakers into three groups. The Polk, JVC and German Maestro sets all have distinct sonic characteristics that are slightly coloured. While they all still sound great you need to audition them with your own music styles to see if what they serve up suits you.

The Audison Voce and Hertz HSK 165 are the clinical sounding sets and will satisfy the highly discerning audiophile who listens to quality recordings and values excellent engineering and build quality. I also think these sets would score highest in MEASQ competition.

This leaves the Vibe lite air 6, DLS RS6 and Morel Dotech Ovation sets, and I lump these three together as the more enjoyable sets for regular listening. These all sound fabulous with all music styles and aren't so sensitive as to not flatter compressed music like MP3 when needed. It is these three sets that will make most of you happy and will also be the least fatiguing over time.

So, who won?

The best sounding set here (just) is the Morel Dotech Ovation, but the DLS RS6 are best value.