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SPECIAL REPORTS **MOTORING**

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AUDIO
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Refining quality of a factory-issue system

This week's audio highlight is a system upgrade of the factory-issue version whose original head unit was retained, while other parts were changed with ARC Audio components, the details of which can be studied from the accompanying diagram (not including the damping and Sound concept).

Total cost of the system is B49,000. Let's see if the sound quality is worth the money spent.

In addition is the crossover and bass volume component that comes with the Sub box.

The Sub box is the major difference that will allow you to experience sound quality that is a step above the standard system.

You will be able to enjoy low frequency signals of high quality and superior to factory-issue speakers.

The Sub box will allow you to tune and adjust according to the style of

music. But I recommend that the Sub box be moved to a more easy-to-reach location since frequent sound adjustments need to be made.

Sound quality

I tested it with many styles of music and the results were borderline hi-end due to limitations of the original head unit that came with the car in the first place.

The head unit was not able to give micro dynamic sound details when listening to 20-24 bits discs. You will realise that a lot of details are missing.

However, the fact that speakers, power amplifier and Sub box are high quality, the overall sound quality results in easy sound that's not tiring on the ears, so to speak.

You can change music styles by adjusting the bass volume as desired. The important aspect

is the adjustment of the bass or treble at the head unit, which can be done with only two clicks of the volume switch.

If you exceed two clicks, the sound stage and tonal balance will be off owing to the limitations of the head unit.

In summary the B49,000 is worth the investment in return for the sound delivered. And the interior of the car retains its original look.

Installation

Starting with setting up a system that uses high power signals from the head unit separated into front and rear sets that are fed into the Performance RHM-12 signal converter. The modified signal is then channelled into the power amp.

Details on installation are as follows:

- ◆ Front speakers are fitted into the original slots at the both doors which underwent extra damping.
- ◆ Rear speakers go in the original space as well.
- ◆ The Sub box is compact and very thin which is why installing it at the front left seat area is considered a safe spot and does not compromise space; in addition to giving a natural bass up front sound that doesn't require phase adjustment, the Sub box also has a switch for crossover and bass volume with wire located under the left compartment box which is not convenient but maybe intended for experienced hands only.
- ◆ At the rear is a Sound concept which gives off a light blue hue in the dark. A compact power amplifier ARC KS-125.4 is housed in the concept, but don't be fooled by its size because its reworked circuitry allows it to be much more efficient with enhanced capability.

User-friendliness

It works just like the old system that came with the Mini Cooper. The only



Untouched head unit is the weak point.

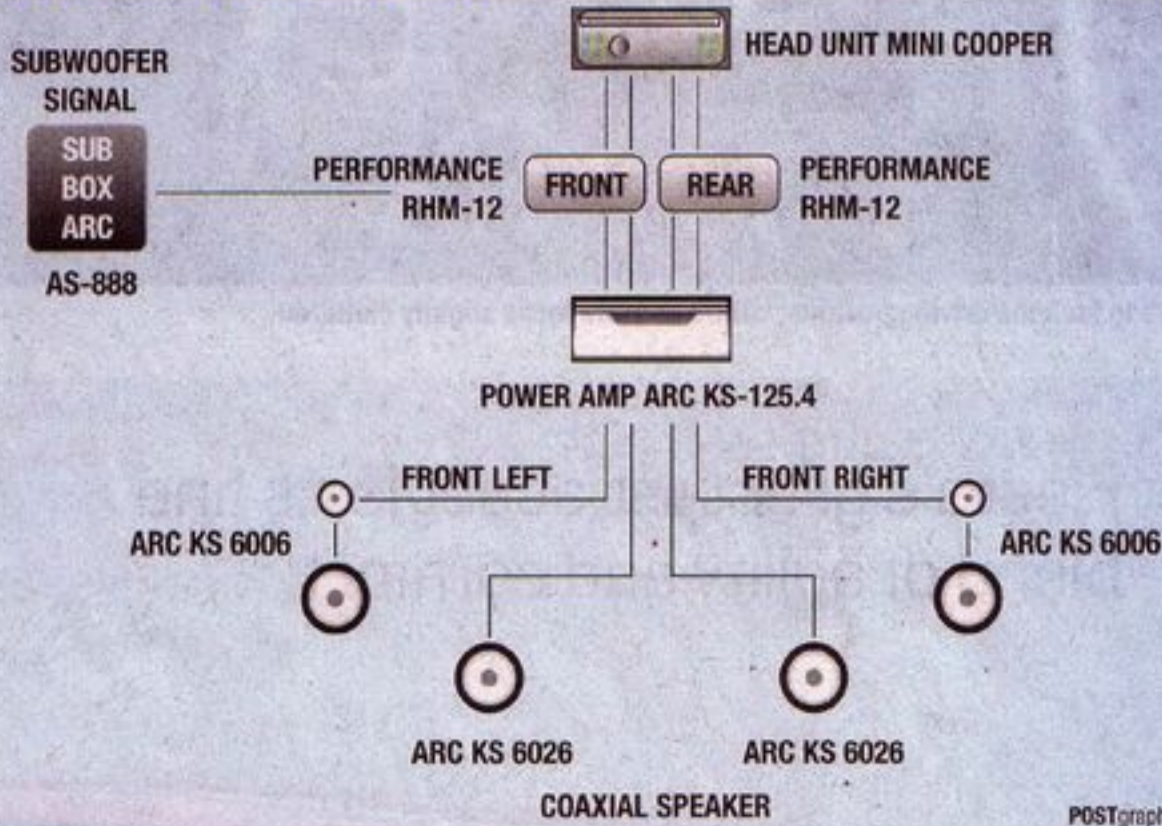


Sub box control at left front seat's foot area.



Sound Concept in rear of vehicle.

SYSTEM DIAGRAM



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