

# HERTZ HSK 165



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## GREAT SOUND AND A GREAT VALUE

Back in the late '70s and early to mid '80s, if you wanted great sound in a car, you'd probably look to a European speaker manufacturer to fill your needs, as there was a real dearth of good-sounding American-made speakers available back then. However, those European drivers were designed primarily for home use and didn't stand up too well to the rigors of the automotive environment. Today we have many good-sounding speakers to choose from, but my interest was piqued when I learned I was to audition a set of Italian-made drivers from Hertz, a subsidiary of Elettromedia. I developed a preference for the "European" sound back then, and I'm anxious to see how things have progressed in the last 20 years or so.

### IMPRESSIONS

I received the Hertz HSK 165 components in an average-sized, attractive orange and black box. Upon opening the box, I found a pair of 166mm (6 1/2") low-frequency drivers of average depth, 67mm (2 5/8"), so mounting shouldn't be much of a prob-

lem. The only snafu might be the fact that there's only a 4-bolt pattern on the woofer flange, instead of the multi-patterns common to many other 6 1/2" woofers. Mounting it in your car may mean drilling some additional holes to secure these components. These woofers incorporate soft iron plates for high heat dissipation, copper voice coil windings on a Kapton former, a vented bottom plate, a polypropylene cone with a phase-plug-shaped dust cap for better off-axis response, standard DIN-sized basket and a "Double Wave Rubber" surround with a fiber spider to keep everything aligned.

The cotton soft-dome tweeters use a neodymium motor and are small at 41mm (1 5/8") in diameter, with a mounting depth of 17mm (11/16"), so they shouldn't be much of a problem to fix in place. They incorporate three different mounting schemes: surface, angled surface and flush mount. The tweeters are secured with a unique spring-steel ring with teeth on the inside that pressure fits around the back of the tweeter for flush mounting—simple and elegant.

The crossovers appear to be comprised of quality components, aren't overly large, and incorporate -3, 0, and +3 dB attenuation settings. All mounting hardware is supplied so installation into my test boxes was a snap. A full-size woofer and tweeter pattern is included on the box.

### LISTENING

#### BLUES

Susan Tedeschi "Just Won't Burn"  
One of today's most soulful, emotional and powerful female blues singers goes by the name of Susan Tedeschi. The fact that she's an accomplished guitar player doesn't hurt either. The title track of this album, "Just Won't Burn," shows off Tedeschi's range, both vocally and musically, and the Hertz 165's do a commendable job of reproducing all the emotional and physical intensity of this track. The song starts with a short solo guitar riff, followed by a drum roll, the entry vocal and the rest of the band, consisting of a bass and a Hammond B3 organ. The HSK 165's do a good job of differentiating the individual instruments in the band;

and there's a reasonable feeling of the space between the players on stage. Placement of the instruments on stage is pretty good and the images are stable. Low-end extension is well above average and the instruments all have appropriate weight and presence. The cymbals have a realistic shimmer to them, and the drum kit sounds great too. When Tedeschi gets aggressive in her guitar solo, the HSK's handle the stress with aplomb. So far, I haven't heard anything that jumped out and bit my ears. Everything sounds smooth when it should and edgy when that's called for. I could very easily live with these speakers with just the addition of a single 8" or 10" subwoofer.

**Score: 15/20**

**VOCAL**

**Take Six "Trust in Me"**

Take Six is a six-man vocal group that on this a cappella track makes every single sound you hear, all the bass and percussion too, with their voices or other parts of their bodies. It's amazing what these guys can do and the HSK 165's let me hear all the complexity of this track. I hear a very wide stage, wider than the speaker placement, and all the inner detail that can easily get lost when listening to the song on inferior speakers. Again, I'm surprised by the low-frequency extension exhibited by these 6 1/2" drivers. Hand claps, snapping fingers, beating on chests—it all comes through loud and clear. I'd swear I'm hearing an entire band, not just six guys without any instruments other than what God gave them. There's a lead tenor at 2:45 that gets really intense and the HSK's render his tasty line without any fuss or drama.

**Score: 14/20**

**JAZZ**

**Steely Dan "What a Shame About Me"**

Steely Dan has been at the top of my favorites list ever since I first heard them back in, I think, 1972. (Careful, I'm dating myself here.) Their unique sound and jazz/rock roots have given them incredible staying power, and their fans, myself included, anxiously await the release of each album. This track starts out with a bell tree, rendered with appropriate sparkle by the HSK 165's. Walter Becker's jazz guitar has all the soul and body it should have, and I can easily discern the bass player's fingers sliding along the strings. The system could use a small subwoofer, but bass performance is quite acceptable even without one. Donald Fagen's voice is stable, forward in the mix and centered on the soundstage, and the sound of the horn section seems to come from behind the rest of the band. All of the individual horns are distinguishable and the backup vocals and Harmon-muted trumpet all work together to give this track its unique Steely Dan sound. The HSK's do a beautiful job of reproducing this track.

**Score: 16/20**

**ROCK**

**Dire Straits "Sultans of Swing"**

Mark Knopfler and band are another group I've enjoyed over the years and listening to this track on the HSK 165's certainly validates my affection for them. Since this is a rock song, I turned up the volume to performance level and the HSK's sound better the more power I send to them. They're receiving 200 watts RMS from two bridged pairs of channels of an Esoteric E7056 amp and they're rated for 250 watts. The bass really surprises me. I literally feel the pressure wave they produce in my living room, and there's

no breakup, just clean, precise rock 'n' roll! At high levels Knopfler's guitar has just the right edge to it, verging on, but never crossing, the line of distortion. Cymbals, in particular, are very realistic-sounding and the rest of the drum kit really drives the intensity of this song. High-frequency response has been very pleasing on everything I've listened to so far and rivals, and in some cases surpasses, that exhibited by speakers costing two and three times as much. If your musical tastes include rock 'n' roll, you'd be remiss unless you consider these drivers as a candidate for your next set of primary speakers.

**Score: 16/20**

**COUNTRY**

**Lyle Lovett "Nobody Knows Me"**

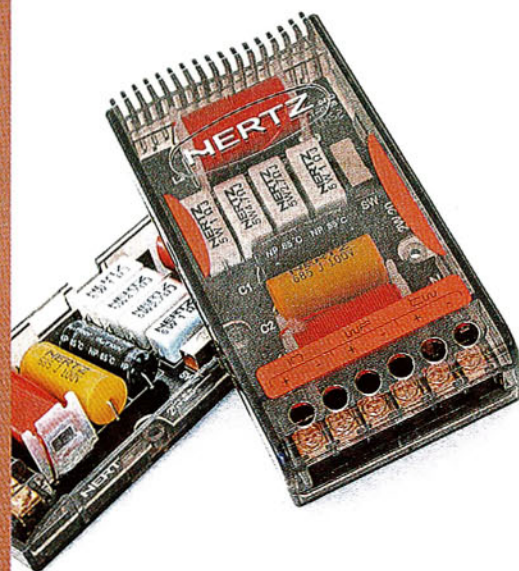
In general, I'm not your biggest country music fan, but there are a few artists in this genre that transcend country music and cross over into mainstream pop, and even a little jazz. Lyle Lovett, in my humble opinion, has to be one of the most versatile performers in country today. His unique voice and style set him apart from all the rest and have allowed him to stay at the pinnacle of male country artists. "Nobody Knows Me" is a slow, intimate ballad incorporating Lovett's guitar, a piano, a bass and a violin, so it's totally acoustic and mic'd very closely to reveal all the subtle detail in the sonic signature of the instruments being played. The HSK 165's reproduce this track very faithfully, conveying all the emotion in Lovett's voice and the warmth of the acoustic presentation without any hot spots or distortion. The fullness of the bass coming in at 0:54 is nothing short of amazing, especially for a set of speakers with a retail price of only \$399! The sound of the bowed violin and the upper notes of the piano don't seem to upset these speakers. A splendid performance, indeed!

**Score: 17/20**

**SUBJECTIVE SCORE CHART**

	Points Possible	Hertz HSK 165
Overall Sound Quality	20	15.3
Tonal Balance	10	08
Low-Frequency Extension	10	08
Clarity at Low Volume	10	08
Clarity at High Volume	10	06
Image Stability	10	07
Listening Fatigue	10	09
Installation Ease/Flexibility	20	12
<b>Total Subjective Score</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>73.3</b>

Ratings: Average performance is equal to 1/2 total points possible.



**CONCLUSION**

Elettromedia, parent company of Hertz speakers and Audison amplifiers, certainly did their homework on these fine speakers. For a retail price of only \$399, the HSK 165's show themselves extraordinarily well. Heck, they stand tall against speakers costing two and three times as much! If you're looking for an excellent-sounding component set for your front stage, look no further than the Hertz HSK 165 and put the money you saved on the speakers toward electronics good enough to get the most out of them. Hats off to Signore Pantaleone and his talented crew at Elettromedia. ✘

