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Budget Powered Monitors with Beefy Bottom.

By Rusty Cutchin



KRK SYSTEMS RP-6

KRK's pro close-field monitors have traditionally been a welcome relief from the clinical hyperaccuracy of certain studio monitors that can kill your love of music as they help you create a reliable mix. Given a choice between entrenched standard-issue speakers and KRK models, many engineers prefer the latter, especially the company's midline and high-end monitors, which offer a clear sound, ample power, and the courage to be different, despite the speakers' yellow-bellied appearance.

But despite that consistently good impression, I was stunned by the sound quality of KRK's "entry-level" RP-6, a member of the company's Rokit series of powered monitors. The RP-6 (also known as the Rokit Powered 6) is an amazing performer when configured in a stereo pair. The monitor delivers crisp highs from its soft-dome tweeter and room-filling bass from its 6-inch driver.

Teamed with the company's RP-10S subwoofer (see the December 2005 issue of EM or www.emusician.com for a review of KRK's RP-10S subwoofer and V8 monitor), the RP-6 gives you a bone-crushing system for creating big mixes in small rooms. To top it off, the system is available at street prices of less than \$700.

Package Perfect

Although much of the RP-6's great value can be attributed to industry developments such as general improvements in monitor design and cost savings from foreign manufacturing, the RP-6 (see Fig. 1) fuses several advantages expertly. Its components are housed in a sleek 10½-inch-deep cabinet with rounded corners to cut down on edge

diffraction. A slotted front port runs across the bottom of the front panel. The tightly packed 6-inch glass aramid composite woofer and 1-inch ferro-fluid-cooled neodymium soft-dome tweeter are housed neatly in a figure-8 rim. The woofer's yellow cone balances nicely with the amber power indicator that's nestled in between the *K* and *I* of the Rokit logo.

The input options on the RP-6's rear panel (see Fig. 2) make it ready for any studio situation. You can choose from balanced XLR and TRS inputs as well as unbalanced RCA. A volume pot runs from -30 dB (off) to 6 dB with 0 at the 12 o'clock position. A 4-position high-frequency level adjust pot can be set to -2, -1, 0, or +1 dB to fit your room. A large power toggle switch and power cord receptacle round out the rear panel. The RP-6's



FIG. 1: KRK's RP-6 produces surprisingly strong bass response from its 6-inch driver.

power section supplies 50W to the woofer and an efficient 18W to the tweeter.

The RP-10S, which was supplied for this review, is an excellent fit for the RP-6s, although it doesn't have TRS outputs. In most cases, you would run your main L-R feed from your board or audio interface directly to the subwoofer, and then pass the high-frequency stereo component on to the RP-6s through the RP-10S's XLR or RCA outputs. The RP-10S's crossover-pot setting is continuously variable from 50 Hz to 130 Hz. The gain pot duplicates the RP-6's range of -30 dB to 6 dB.

Battle of the Sixes

I wasn't expecting much when I first connected the RP-6s. Although I picked up a pair of KRK's Rokit-brand monitors several years ago and have been happy with them in my home entertainment system, I never considered buying them for serious studio work. The line disappeared for a while as KRK introduced other models, including its recently redesigned V-series monitors. As a result, these new Rokits, with their yellow cones, might have indicated a desperate grab at the low-end market rather than a budget model worthy of the KRK imprimatur.

I knew that the RP-6s were in the latter category within a few seconds of pumping everything from 50 Cent to full-orchestra rerecordings of early-20th-century show scores into them. Highs were smooth and distortion-free without sinking into a pool of shimmering mess. Midrange elements were easily distinguishable, and stereo imaging was acceptable, if not exceptional.

What really surprised me was the RP-6's bass handling when set up as a stereo-only monitor system. I generally prefer to work with 8-inch or larger drivers with a frequency response down to at least 30 Hz or so. That gives me enough bass for accurate mixing without needing to set up a subwoofer for low-end enhancement. A stereo pair with 6-inch drivers almost forces you to work with a subwoofer, unless you always work with very low levels.

RP-6 SPECIFICATIONS

Analog Inputs	(1) balanced XLR; (1) balanced ¼" TRS; (1) unbalanced RCA
Frequency Response	49 Hz–20 kHz, ±1.5 dB
High-Frequency Driver	1" soft dome
Low-Frequency Driver	6" aramid glass fiber
Power Rating	18W (HF); 50W (LF)
Signal-to-Noise Ratio	84 dB (HF); 95 dB (LF)
T.H.D.	0.09% (HF); 0.01% (LF)
Input Impedance	10 kΩ (balanced, unbalanced)
Crossover Frequency	2.6 kHz
Subsonic Filter	40 Hz
Dimensions	8.8" (W) × 12.9" (H) × 10.5" (D)
Weight	23 lbs.

The RP-6s sound great, while offering good bass response—as ample a bass volume as I've experienced with 6-inch drivers. (The RP-6's low-end frequency response extends to 49 Hz.) The trade-off here, as I expected, was an increase in muddiness in the low mids, typically evidenced by a loss of definition in fingered electric bass parts. Adding the RP-10S subwoofer enabled me to have more control over that trade-off.

Sub Satisfaction

What's more, the RP-10S is a great complement. The subwoofer looks and sounds perfectly matched to the mains, and delivers just the kind of bottom you'd expect; its front-firing 10-inch low-frequency driver puts the punch of a club's worth of sound reinforcement in a small control room, and with the RP-10S's amp delivering 150W of bass energy, the RP-6s are free to pump out crisp mids and highs, which they did with only a slight audible midrange scoop. (A quick trip to 50 Cent's Web site to listen to the groove on "Hustler's Ambition" confirmed my earlier impression that the RP-10S rocks the house on hip-hop material.)

PRODUCT SUMMARY

KRK SYSTEMS RP-6

powered monitors
\$399.99 each

PROS: Excellent sound. Exceptional bass response. Multiple inputs.

CONS: Slight low-end muddiness.

FEATURES	■ ■ ■ ■ ■
EASE OF USE	■ ■ ■ ■ ■
AUDIO QUALITY	■ ■ ■ ■ ■
VALUE	■ ■ ■ ■ ■

MANUFACTURER
KRK Systems
www.krksys.com

As I have worked with more subs over the past few years, I've become increasingly comfortable with speaker placement and controls, and the simplicity and range of this Rokit configuration was a delight to work with. The RP-6s, which sounded fine alone, suddenly jumped up a notch in effectiveness. With the sub set to handle only the lowest frequencies (below 80 Hz), acoustic piano parts had an enveloping richness rather than the focused directionality they exhibited in the stereo pair. Adjusting the sub's gain control to near zero imparted that effect across several instrument groups, while raising the gain control made the system jump with energy when kicking a dance track. It's hard to imagine even bleary-eyed club DJs not being impressed by the bass energy churned up by this system.

Win-Win

KRK's Rokit line is best suited to the small composing or project studio, but that doesn't mean that seasoned pros should cross them off their shopping lists. (KRK also sells the RP-5 and RP-8 monitors, which offer 5- and 8-inch drivers, respectively.) It's a measure of the company's faith in the RP-10S, for example, that it was sent as a companion to the midline V8 monitor that EM recently reviewed. Studio owners with 24/7 operation or critical full-time mix assignments will want to check out the higher-end designs that put KRK on the map. The company's offerings consistently have been worth appraising for studios of all sizes.



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FIG. 2: The RP-6 provides a full complement of inputs, including balanced XLR, balanced ¼-inch TRS, and unbalanced RCA.

But the Rokit Powered 6 is a unique animal. It offers surprising bass handling and respectable high-end clarity at a great price. Used with the RP-10S, the RP-6 has all the elements of a great 2.1 system: excellent sound, dependable accuracy, great power handling, an easy fit into any production environment, and a system cost that beats the price of some single studio monitors.

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