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# Meyer Sound MJF-208 Compact Stage Monitor

By: Mark Johnson

Ahhhhhh. That new speaker smell...You have to be a true audio geek to appreciate the smell of a new speaker when you unpack it. To go along with the industrial fragrance, the paint is unblemished, there are no bashed-in corners on the enclosure, no dents or scratches on the grille. It's audio heaven. Of course, for any piece of equipment destined for use in pro audio, all of this is short-lived, for soon the gear will be tossed in a truck, thrown on stage, and generally dragged around for the rest of its useful life. However, for a brief period of time, it's brand-spanking new. And this is one of the cool things about reviewing equipment: the experience of unpacking a new piece of gear. That's the experience I had when I took delivery of a pair of Meyer Sound's new MJF-208 stage monitors, hot off the assembly line.

Established in 1979, Meyer Sound has stayed true to its roots, maintaining its headquarters on the East Bay side of the San Francisco Bay Area and always following a path of innovation. Starting with its first product for live sound, the UM-1 UltraMonitor, the company has introduced several industry firsts and pioneered many concepts that are commonplace today—for example, that of arrayability in a loudspeaker system and the resultant trapezoidal loudspeaker enclosure to help effect arraying the speakers in a system, both physically and acoustically, for which a patent was awarded. This was first demonstrated in the UPA-1 (1980), a product that, along with the UM-1, became a mainstay in the musical theatre market. Meyer Sound also pioneered the concept of Source Independent Measurement (SIM) in 1984, and developed the hardware and software to effect precise measurements on a sound system while in a performance situation.

Meyer also developed some of the first commercially viable self-powered loudspeaker systems for live sound, starting with the MSL-4 in 1994. Now, in a sense, the company comes back to its roots with a new stage monitor. The MJF-208 is the smaller sibling to the other two monitors in the MJF series, the MJF-212A and the MJF-210.

The self-powered MJF-208 weighs in at just 45lb (22lb lighter than the original unpowered UM-1 and 32lb lighter than the self-powered UM-1P), making it easy to pick up and move around. The MJF-208 sports an extremely low profile, which makes it great for video (no big monitors to take up space in the frame), or any other production environment where you might want to deemphasize anything in the line of sight of whatever is happening on stage.



## Little black number

The MJF-208 is just 13" at its tallest point, 18 ¾" wide, and 18 ½" deep. The enclosure is constructed of multi-ply birch and comes in a textured black finish. The grille is stamped steel with hex perforations, powder-coated black, and backed with a black mesh screen material. Custom colors are available at no extra charge if the order is for 10 or more units.

The MJF-208 sports two neoprene strips, which are almost the width of the speaker, mounted across the front and the back of the speaker for "feet." They help to keep the bottom from getting scratched up. The handle cups mounted on either side are molded in the angle of the face of the speaker and provide plenty of room to get your hands around the handles. You can easily grab and carry it with one or two hands.

The amplifier is mounted in the back, making it accessible for connections or service, even if, other than power and signal, there's nothing to connect or adjust. Signal input is accomplished via a standard three-pin XLR or optional five-pin (the extra pins are to carry data for Meyer's RMS remote



The angular handle cups make the unit easy to grab onto and pick up.



The back of the MJF-208, including the modular, three-channel amplifier, and I/O.

monitoring system). The optional RMS module can also be accessed directly to the module via a Phoenix connector. RMS provides detailed monitoring of all operating parameters of the amplifier.

The MJF-208 is a two-way system that comprises two 8" low-frequency cone drivers, and one 3" diaphragm compression high-frequency horn driver. The coverage is 70° horizontal x 50° vertical.

The MJF-208 is international. A three-channel Class D amp, incorporating Meyer's Intelligent AC power supply, facilitates onboard amplification. Intelligent AC provides automatic voltage selection and the ability to operate from 100V to 240V AC, 50Hz – 60Hz.

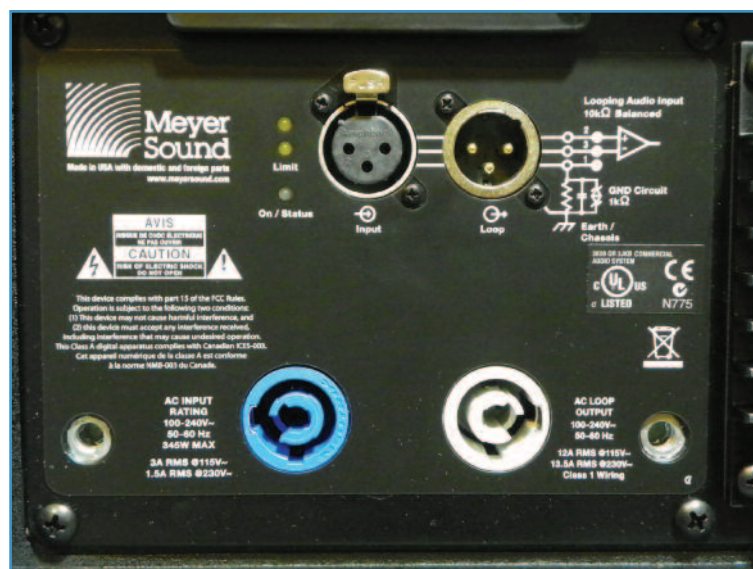
## No precision adjustment device needed

I was initially concerned that, with its relatively flat angle (the front angle of the speaker is 35°), I'd need to be right on top of it to be in the sweet spot. Just looking at it, I was convinced that I would have to employ the tried-and-true precision adjustment device (a two-by-four block of wood, spare DI box, or other similar object) to prop up the back of the speaker. I have two that I have fabricated and used over the years. Little did I realize that their use was to be denied! I stood about 3' back, with the horn focused right at my head and slowly backed up. I was able to get about 10' back from the speaker with still-great intelligibility. Even when I was up close and personal, it was difficult to make it feed back.

## It's light, but not a lightweight

Meyer Sound does not state a maximum SPL in its preliminary data, but these things can get real loud. Try as I might,

I was not able to clip the input; it just kept getting louder. The term "power-to-weight ratio" typically applies to motorcycles or cars, but it is wholly applicable when describing the MJF-208. In spite of its small footprint and light weight, it can pack quite a punch.



I/O of the amplifier module. An optional panel provides connectivity for RMS remote monitoring system, for monitoring performance parameters.

The operational frequency response is 55Hz — 18kHz and while the low frequency is not extended, it is there. You get the attack of a bass note, just not so much of the "welly" (an expression used in the UK to describe deep, full,



powerful low end in sound systems). Besides, that's what subwoofers are made for. (And Meyer has some in its product lineup that would probably do nicely). Where the MJF-208 really excels is in the vocal range. One of my colleagues described it as being really stable. The sound is smooth and the highs are well-defined, without any edginess.

Where I work, we regularly hold events in an intimate venue with a smallish stage and I've always felt the monitors we use are a bit large for the available real estate. To have the Meyer MJF-208s to try was something I was looking forward to. (Only a true audio geek gets excited about trying new gear.)

As noted, the stage is small and we typically only use two monitors to cover whatever is happening on it. It's an extremely basic setup, and we do all sorts of events, from presentations to open mics to small musical ensembles. So it's important for the monitors we use to provide good front-to-back coverage. The relatively wide and deep coverage of the 208, coupled with its small footprint, was just what the doctor ordered. So far, the MJF-208s have been used for small ensemble musical performances (solo to quartet), mostly contemporary rock music, and as foldback for a presentation on a larger stage. The latter application was cool because the low pro-

file keeps the sight lines clean and the wide coverage allows them to be set at the downstage corners (again, great sight lines) and the working area where the presenter was (all over the stage), was covered.

While not really needed for my review application, Meyer also provided an MDM-832 distribution module for routing power, audio, and RMS to the MJF-208s (or any other stage monitor in its lineup) for me to look at. When used with composite cabling (available in bulk from Meyer and in premade lengths and versions from third-party suppliers) that carries signal, power, and monitoring data, the setup and resulting spaghetti city of cabling on stage is reduced. I didn't have any of the combo cable, so I wasn't able to test the whole rig as intended. I do like the concept, though; it's kind of like the stage box for mic inputs for mixing consoles, just in reverse. The provided 5' power cable is understandably beefy, with a 30A twist-lock Hubbell connector on one end and a 32A Neutrik powerCON for connection to the MDM-832.

The front panel of the MDM-832, which is the output side, has eight sets (two sets of four) connectors. Each set comprises a male XLR for signal, an FT-10 connector for RMS networking (or, optionally, a five-pin XLR for both signal and networking), and a powerCON for AC. Each set of

four connectors has a corresponding 15A breaker switch and a "power on" indicator light.

The backside has eight female XLR connectors, each with a corresponding recessed link switch. There are two FT-10 connectors for RMS (plus a recessed terminator switch). There's also a panel-mount powerCON for the AC in to the unit. The link switch allows for linking to the adjacent input. For instance, Inputs 1 and 2 can be linked, or Inputs 2 and 3. You have the ability to route your input in a variety of ways; pairs, trios, sets of four, or combinations. By virtue of cascading, you can link all inputs to one. I don't know if this is considered an analog or a mechanical router. Whatever, it's a clever application.

The MJF-208 and the ancillary MDM-832 are both well-thought-out and immensely practical. The speaker can be used in any number of performance situations, whether size is a consideration or not. Even if used in a larger ensemble, it can easily power through the din onstage. But if size does matter, the MJF-208 should definitely make your short list; houses of worship, orchestra pits, clubs, cruise ships, small-to-mid-size stages, and corporate AV, to name applications that immediately come to mind.

Contact Meyer Sound for pricing information for the MJF-208 and the MDM-832. 