

# JBL L40



# L40

## A Practical Application Of Technology

The L40 represents a practical application of data acquired designing sophisticated products for home, recording studio, musical instrument and professional applications. JBL engineers explored dozens of possibilities with the ultimate goal of creating an extremely accurate, moderately priced bookshelf loudspeaker system. In some instances, the performance compromises were not acceptable. In others, methods were found to improve the product and still effect cost reductions. When all the research was complete, the engineers remained adamant about one essential point. They demonstrated, beyond all question, that an extremely sophisticated frequency dividing network more than justified its nominally higher cost by providing audibly improved performance.

## A Good Computer, But Can It Hear?

JBL engineers programmed a computer with a very accurate mathematical model of the acoustic interaction between a low frequency loudspeaker and iLs enclosure. Several sets of physical parameters for low frequency loudspeakers and enclosures were entered into the program. The computer performed the appropriate calculations and produced theoretical plots of impedance and frequency response for each set of conditions. The computer, however, is not a substitute for creative engineering; it cannot think and it cannot hear. It can provide a great deal of theoretical information in a very short period of time, significantly contributing to the efficiency of the research and development effort. Laboratory samples of the most promising computer simulations were built; actual performance measurements were compared with the computer simulations. Complete prototype systems comprised of the low frequency loudspeaker, dome radiator, frequency dividing network and enclosure were built and extensively evaluated by a listening panel. The final loudspeaker system was then developed by JBL engineers in response to these subjective listening tests.

## Technical Information

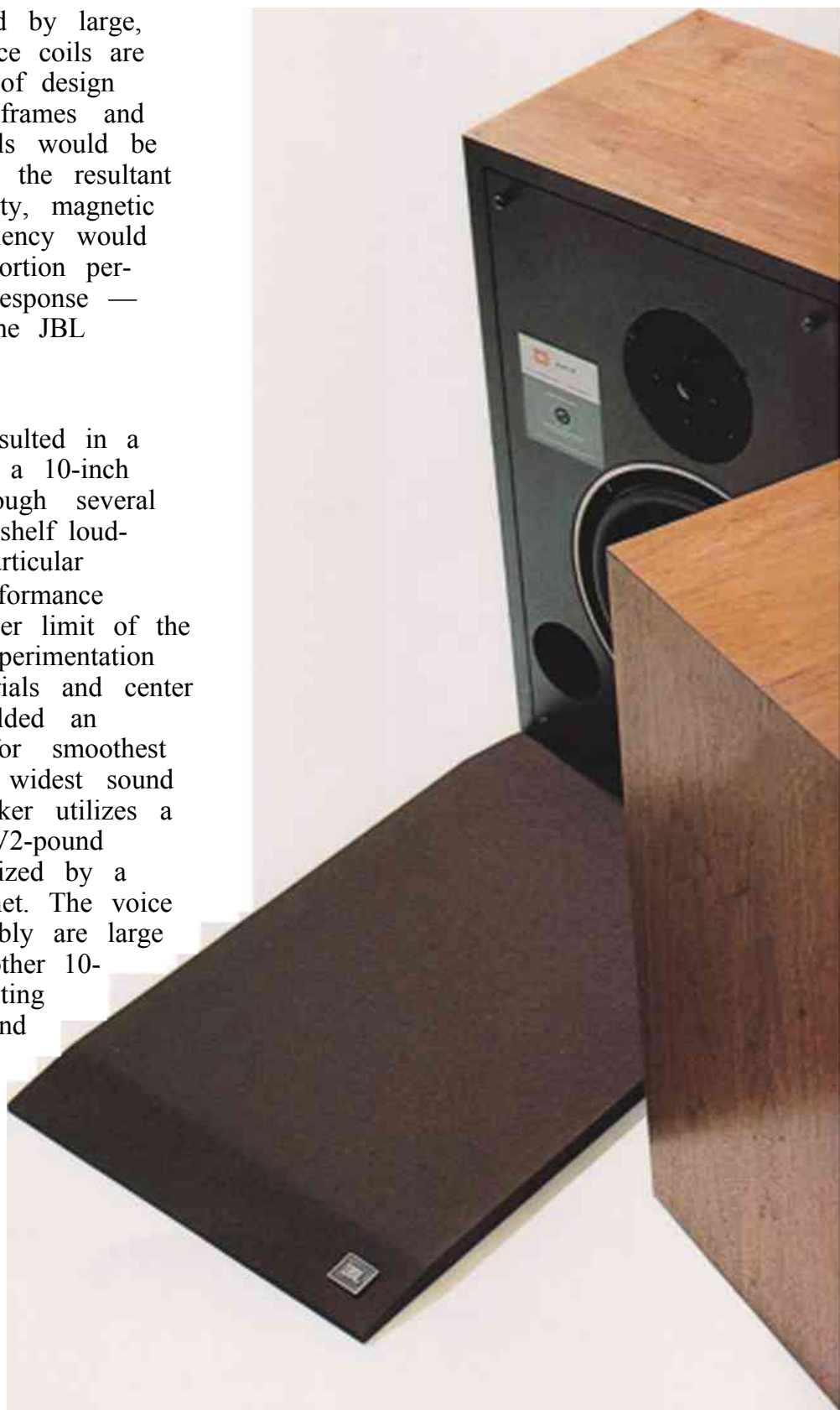
Each component of every JBL loudspeaker system is designed and produced by JBL personnel to the most rigorous standards in the industry. JBL loudspeaker frames are massive cast structures, produced to exacting tolerances. Magnetic assemblies are precisely manufactured of low-reluctance iron, energized by large, high grade magnets. Voice coils are held to within one turn of design specifications. Stamped frames and mass-produced voice coils would be less expensive; however, the resultant loss of structural integrity, magnetic force and acoustic efficiency would tend to degrade low-distortion performance and transient response — qualities that have become JBL hallmarks.

## Low Frequency

Extensive research resulted in a significant refinement of a 10-inch loudspeaker proven through several years of use in JBL bookshelf loudspeaker systems. Of particular importance are the performance characteristics at the upper limit of the transducer's range. Experimentation with various cone materials and center dome configurations yielded an optimum combination for smoothest frequency response and widest sound dispersion. The loudspeaker utilizes a 2-inch voice coil and 2V2-pound magnetic assembly energized by a powerful Alnico V magnet. The voice coil and magnetic assembly are large in comparison to most other 10-inch loudspeakers, resulting in increased efficiency and improved transient response. At higher frequencies.

energy is coupled to the 4-inch center dome; radiation from the dome's smaller area (relative to the area of the loudspeaker cone) maintains wide sound dispersion and smooth response to 1800 Hz, essential for smooth transition to the high frequency dome radiator.

The low frequency loudspeaker is surrounded by a unique acoustic resistance shell which matches the loudspeaker's performance characteristics to the internal volume of the enclosure. The shell consists of fiberglass formed into a basket behind the loudspeaker and provides damping without restricting normal cone movement. The effectiveness of the shell is demonstrated by the smoother loudspeaker impedance curve and iLs audible counterpart — smoother frequency response throughout the bass region.



### High Frequency

The new 1-inch dome radiator combines accuracy, power handling capacity and wide sound dispersion. Its hardened phenolic-impregnated linen dome was engineered to optimize mass, radiating area and stiffness — parameters which directly affect performance. The 1-inch voice coil is equal in diameter to the dome itself, which, along with a large magnetic structure, permits excellent transient response and power handling capacity. The small diameter of the dome results in wide sound dispersion to beyond the limits of audibility.

### Frequency Dividing Network

The signal from the amplifier consists of a wide range of sound frequencies. The frequency dividing network allocates each portion of the audio spectrum to the appropriate

component of the loudspeaker system. Smooth, imperceptible operation of the network is vitally important, otherwise, the listener would perceive the performance of individual components rather than that of a blended loudspeaker system.

Through research programs devoted to developing sophisticated networks for use in recording studio monitors, JBL engineers devised the circuit installed in the L40. Beginning with computed theoretical values, experimental work resulted in a network that integrates the acoustic and electrical characteristics of the individual components of the loudspeaker system. The network maintains smooth frequency response and correct phase relationships through the transition frequencies, deriving the full potential from each of the loudspeaker system components. The network is titled with a continuously variable high frequency level control that allows adjustment of the system to accommodate differences in listening environments and individual preferences.

### Power Capacity

The specified power capacity indicates the continuous program power level that can be accepted by a JBL loudspeaker system without damage. Its peak power capacity is considerably greater than the continuous rated value, as indicated by the remarkable transient response of JBL loudspeaker system components. The L40 will reproduce clean sound at comfortable listening levels when driven by an amplifier having an output of as little as 10 watts continuous sine wave per channel? However, for reproduction of the full dynamic range of contemporary recordings at high volume, a quality amplifier delivering



up to 60 watts continuous sine wave per channel will provide optimum performance. Such an amplifier has the reserve power necessary for accurate reproduction of transients, which can reach momentary peaks equivalent to ten times the average power level. In almost all cases, the volume level generated by a JBL loudspeaker will become noticeably discomforting to the ear before the loudspeaker can be damaged by excessive power from the amplifier.

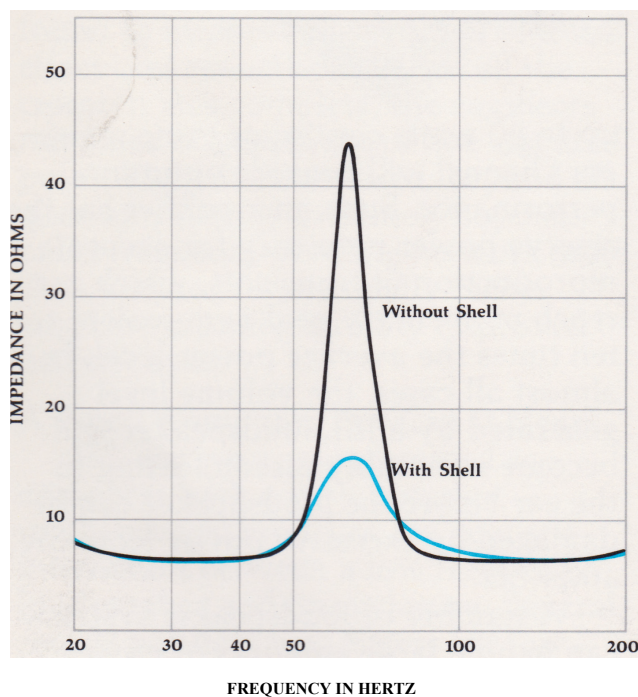
A number of loudspeaker systems can handle large amounts of power; others are highly efficient. JBL products are unique in their ability to combine both attributes. The L40, for example, will convert a 1-watt input into a sound pressure level of 75 dB measured at a distance of 15 feet. This is approximately twice as loud as ordinary conversation and represents a comfortable listening level, demonstrating that the system delivers substantial sound output from very little input power.

*1. The continuous sine wave rating of amplifier power is the most stringent method currently used in the audio industry. It should be noted that many amplifier manufacturers use the term "watts rms" as a direct equivalent to the more meaningful "watts continuous sine wave"*



## Enclosure

The L40 enclosure complements the acoustic characteristics of the loudspeaker system. It utilizes a ducted port extending through the baffle panel to provide the proper load on the loudspeaker cone for improved efficiency and dynamic range. Enclosure panels are constructed of dense compressed wood. This material, also known as particle board, is preferred to solid wood for its acoustic properties. The finish veneer on the four side panels is solid American Black Walnut, hand rubbed to a rich lustrous finish enhancing the natural beauty of individual grain structure and color. To achieve maximum strength and resistance to vibration, all panels are constructed of 3/4-inch stock; side and back panels are lined with acoustic damping material to attenuate standing waves within the enclosure.



**Effect Of The Acoustic Resistance Shell**  
*Impedance curves of the low frequency loudspeaker mounted in the L40 enclosure were taken under standard laboratory test conditions. The effect of the shell can be seen by comparing curves. Impedance is the electrical load the loudspeaker presents to the amplifier; current is the force required to drive the loudspeaker. Amplifiers provide considerably less current at high impedances than at low impedances. Therefore, the amplifier has less control of the loudspeaker through those frequencies corresponding to the sharp peak in the impedance curve. The shell considerably reduces the magnitude of the peak. The smoother impedance enables the amplifier to maintain consistent control of the loudspeaker through its entire operating range, resulting in corresponding improvement of its frequency response.*



James B. Lansing Sound, Inc.  
 8500 Balboa Boulevard  
 Northridge, California 91329

## Specifications

Rather than repeat the ambiguity of most technical specifications, JBL has traditionally refrained from listing data for which no widely accepted test procedure has been established. In the absence of such standards, any well equipped laboratory can legitimately produce a variety of frequency response curves for a loudspeaker, depending on the conditions selected. At JBL the

final analyses are comprised of extensive listening sessions. Although laboratory data are an integral part of the process, the trained ear is the ultimate criterion. The success of this philosophy is reflected in the enthusiastic acceptance of JBL systems by recording studio engineers, producers and performers —professionals whose artistic achievements are closely related to the equipment they use.

<b>Power Capacity<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>35 watts continuous program</b>
<b>Nominal Impedance</b>	<b>8 ohms</b>
<b>Dispersion<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>150° at 15 kHz, 90° at 20 kHz</b>
<b>Crossover Frequency</b>	<b>1800 Hz</b>
<b>System Sensitivity<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>1 watt produces 75 dB sound pressure level at a distance of 4.6 m (15 ft) (Note: 75-80 dB is a comfortable listening level.)</b>
<b>Low Frequency Loudspeaker</b>	
<b>Nominal Diameter</b>	<b>250 mm 10 in</b>
<b>Voice Coil</b>	<b>50-mm (2 in) copper</b>
<b>Magnetic Assembly Weight</b>	<b>1.1 kg 2.5 lb</b>
<b>Flux Density</b>	<b>0.85 tesla (8500 gauss)</b>
<b>Sensitivity<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>39 dB SPL</b>
<b>High Frequency Hemispherical Radiator</b>	
<b>Hemisphere Diameter</b>	<b>25 mm 1 in</b>
<b>Voice Coil</b>	<b>25-mm (1 in) aluminum</b>
<b>Magnetic Assembly Weight</b>	<b>0.68 kg 1.5 lb</b>
<b>Flux Density</b>	<b>1.4 tesla (14,000 gauss)</b>
<b>Sensitivity<sup>5</sup></b>	<b>41 dB SPL</b>
<b>General</b>	
<b>Finish</b>	<b>Oiled Walnut</b>
<b>Grille</b>	<b>Stretch fabric</b>
<b>Grille Color Options</b>	<b>Brown, Rust or Tan</b>
<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>584 mm x 381 mm x 302 mm deep 23 in x 15 in x 11 1/2 in deep</b>
<b>Shipping Weight</b>	<b>20 kg 44 lb</b>

1. Based on a laboratory test signal. See Power Capacity section for amplifier power recommendations.
2. The angle through which system output is diminished by no more than 6 dB relative to system output measured directly on-axis.
3. System sensitivity can also be expressed as 88 dB SPL at 1 metre (3.3 ft). All sensitivities are measured under hemispherical free-field conditions. In a room, an additional 1 to 3 dB SPL would be achieved.
4. Since the major portion of the energy reproduced by the low frequency loudspeaker lies below 800 Hz, this specification represents the sensitivity, within 1 dB, at 30 feet (9.1 m) using a 1-mW test signal swept from 100 to 500 Hz, rather than the 1-kHz sine wave test signal on which the conventional EIA sensitivity rating is based.
5. Averaged above 2 kHz, within 1 dB, measured at 30 feet (9.1 m) with a 1-mW input.

JBL continually engages in research related to product improvement. New materials, production methods and design refinements are introduced into existing products without notice as a routine expression of that philosophy. For this reason, any current JBL product may differ in some respect from its published description but will always equal or exceed the original design specifications unless otherwise stated.

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## TBL L40 SPEAKER SYSTEM

**General Description** The JBL L40 is a fairly compact speaker system whose dimensions fall about in the class commonly dubbed as "bookshelf" front baffle board behind the grille. Actual measurements are 23 1/8 inches high, 15 inches wide, and 11 7/8 inches deep. The grille figure includes the grille color choices are brown, tan, or black covering which projects slightly forward of the cabinet. The L40 is finished in oiled walnut; the panel may be oriented vertically or horizontally. Weight is 44 pounds. Tweeter control is recessed and suggested retail price is \$207. The unit comes with a "limited warranty" that covers defects in material and workmanship for five years. Shipping charges, return to factory, are paid one-way by JBL. Original owner and subsequent owners are covered. The original bill of sale must be presented.

A two-way system, the L40 employs a 10-inch woofer and a 1-inch dome tweeter, crossover via an internal network. The general impression, work is at 1800 Hz. Bass loading is via a duct that opens on the front baffle. A highfrequency

workmanship. The system "looks" very businesslike and wellcrafted. All parts are designed and made by JBL. Some highlights of their construction and quality are detailed in the owner's manual which is quite good, being very complete, wellpresented, and explaining something of JBL's speaker-design philosophy which makes a lot of sense.

### Performance Evaluation

**General response:** Overall range of the JBL L40 extends from 20 Hz to beyond audibility, and with better than average smoothness. The low end slowly gains in amplitude as frequency is raised and seems to level off at about 50 Hz, then remains quite even except for a slight peak at about 300 Hz, then rising very gradually to the 1 kHz mark. Response continues with a bit of a broad rise across the upper range if the tweeter control is advanced above the "5" marking; with the control at "5," response remains fairly level up to and beyond 10 kHz. With the control below "5" the upper range is slighted. (Our final preference was to set the control to "5").

Some doubling may be detected between 40 Hz and 45 Hz, depending on how hard the L40 is driven. However, the doubling does not worsen as frequency is lowered, and in this respect the L40 seems better than average. At normally loud output levels in a larger-than-average room somewhat on the live side acoustically, the L40 produces a 30 Hz output that can almost be felt as well as heard, which is of course very good performance. To an extent, this will vary with placement as is true of all "bookshelf" systems.

**Dispersion:** For a direct-radiating system the L40 has exemplary dispersion characteristics. No significant directivity is evident until at about 6 kHz and this effect increases only very slightly up the scale. Test tones above 10 kHz remain audible fairly well off-axis,

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## TBL L40 SPEAKER SYSTEM

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and a characteristic rolloff starts at about 15 kHz.

White Noise response: We agree wholeheartedly with JBL on the usefulness of "white noise" as a rigorous test of speaker performance. In the absence of a white noise generator, the rushing noise between stations on an FM dial (if insufficient "rushing noise" is encountered, remove the antenna from the FM set) may be substituted. In our white noise tests, the L40 produced response that varied from "dull" to "hot" depending on the setting of the tweeter level control. At the preferred number 5 position, the response to white noise was excellent: smooth with little audible coloration and amply dispersed into the listening area.

Efficiency and dynamic range: Being duct-loaded, the L40 is relatively more efficient than similarly dimensioned systems of the acoustic suspension design. Low-powered amps or receivers can drive it adequately in normal size rooms. On the other hand, the L40 can take reasonable amounts of input power for much louder volumes in

larger, or more acoustically damped environments. It "opens up" very nicely when powered by an amp or receiver in the 50 to 60 watts-per-channel class. Note that this wattage denotes continuous sine-wave power. So called music power ratings would be much higher, and so too would peak power levels that are hit momentarily.

Musical character: Recently JBL made a statement, quoted in the trade press, to the effect that the era of pronounced "rock sound" speakers had passed. To some extent, this philosophy is evident in the sound of the L40, although a touch of this sound still lingers here in that the upper range is relatively pronounced. Be that as it may, the L40 has very good transient response, and enough "sonic neutrality" to reveal both the good and the bad in a given recording. For this reason, only the best available source material should be auditioned through the L40 if one is to make a good impression with it. Some of the recent direct disc recordings, or well-made prerecorded tapes, ought to suffice

here.

Stereo imaging, with a pair installed as recommended in the manual (so that the listener is at an angle of about 40 degrees between the pair), is very good laterally, and fairly good in terms of front-to-rear depth.

### Conclusions

All told, the JBL L40 is among the better speaker systems currently offered. Its primary appeal, we would judge, is to a relatively younger audience although doubtless many older listeners also will like it. In terms of musical style preference (classical or pop/rock) it is not possible to say with certainty (as it once may have been for older JBL systems) that this speaker will interest one type of listener more than another type. From the standpoint of its use in a home music system, it is apparent that the L40 will mate with any number of available amplifiers and receivers in the low to medium power class. Finally, for the best balanced sound in most rooms, the L40 probably should be raised somewhat off the floor, on a low bench or pedestal.

Loud and Proud

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