MEASUREMENT SPECIALTIES

Piezo Film Sensors

Technical Manual

Internet Version

Part 13 of 18

Audio
Speakers
Microphones

EHAG
ELECTRONIC HARDWARE AG

Industriestr. 8 8618 Oetwil a/S. Tel: +41 43 844 94 00 Fax: +41 43 844 94 01
http://www.ehag.ch E-Mail: info@ehag.ch

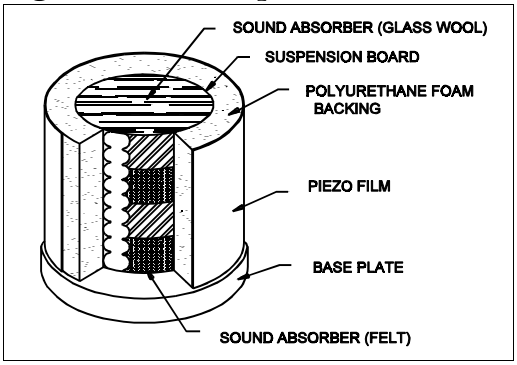
AUDIO

Speakers

One of the earliest applications for piezo film was in stereo tweeters (Figure 64) and headset speakers developed by Pioneer Electronics. There is strong renewed interest in these applications as a result of the improvements in the reliability of the electrodes and lead attachment and packaging techniques. Gallo Acoustics has developed a high fidelity omnidirectional tweeter using a cylinder of 52 um thick piezo film. The tweeter rolls off at frequencies below 2 kHz, and features:

- 330 degrees of horizontal dispersion at high frequencies, which is as much as ten times the dispersion of conventional tweeters,
- very wide dynamic range,
- linear frequency response,
- very fast impulse response, faithfully reproducing the highest frequencies.

Figure 64. Audio speaker



Novelty audio speakers have also been developed. These devices make use of the thin, light weight, conformal nature of the piezo film. Examples include speakers for inflatables (like balloons and air inflatable toys), speakers in apparel (including headgear) and paper thin speakers for magazine advertising, greeting cards and posters.

Microphones

A diaphragm of piezo film, affixed in a retaining ring or mounted over a hole in a plate, makes an excellent microphone. A support is introduced into the design to take the membrane slightly out of its neutral axis with a foam backing, a small post, bar or structure to give the film membrane a slight radius of curvature. A self-supporting, cylindrically curved film also achieves the mechanical bias, but is not normally used. A typical radius of curvature for piezo film microphones which optimizes sensitivity and electroacoustic efficiency is R_o = 25 mm, similar to that of an electrostatic microphone construction.

Sennheiser reports a frequency response for a typical foam backed piezo film microphone of 25 mm diameter, having R_o = 25 mm. The free field sensitivity of the device measured at 1 KHz, for sound pressure incident on the membrane perpendicularly, was -58 dB re 1 V/Pa. Harmonic distortion approaches 1% only at sound pressure levels exceeding 122 dB, and are not significantly higher for the range of higher frequencies.

Microphones built with piezo film are low cost, but more importantly, are inherently immune to moisture, unlike electrostatic types.

Electrostatics dominate the market due to the low cost that has been achieved through very high volume manufacturing. Nonetheless, piezo film microphones are finding application in designs where environmental stability is critical. Waterproof microphones are being supplied for divers, withstanding total immersion in salt water without damage.