

Oxford Speakers - A History Lesson

*** Excerpt from an article written by Greg Gagliano for Vintage Guitar Magazine:

Oxford speaker letter codes denote power handling. The higher the letter, the higher the power rating. I found an Oxford ad in a 1960s trade magazine with the peak power ratings of some speakers: K = 25 watts, L = 30 watts, M = 40 watts, and T = 45 watts (12" speaker) or 60 watts (15" speaker). It is important to note that these are peak power ratings, not RMS power. The RMS rating is more realistic and is usually about half of the peak rating so use that as a rough guide.

The "J" rated speakers are usually found on 12-watt Princetons. The "K" rated speakers are found in reverb and non-reverb Deluxes and in multi-speaker amps up to 40-watts such as the Tremolux and Concert. The "L" rated speakers are found in reverb and non-reverb Deluxes, some Tremolux amps, and multi-speaker amps like the blackface Concert, Super Reverb and Vibrolux Reverb. The "M" rated speakers had good service life in the piggyback Bassman and Bandmaster amps, but were easily blown in blonde Twins. The "T" rated speakers were standard in Twin Reverbs, but like the Jensen C12Ns, they often had a short service life.

Many amp geeks don't like Oxford speakers found in Fender amps from 1965 through the 1970s. The gap distance was increased in the Oxfords that Fender used later in the decade and this reduced their efficiency (and they were cheaper to make this way). Again, I say let your ears be your guide. I've heard many great sounding Fender amps with Oxfords. I will admit that I prefer Jensens, but I've never let an Oxford speaker sway my decision from owning a Fender amp. Additionally, the Oxfords from early '60s generally sound very good. According to noted vintage amp specialist Gregg Hopkins, these early Oxfords were constructed similarly to Jensens from that period with respect to materials and voice coil gap. That could explain why they sound good.

As always, let your own ears be your guide.