

5 TITLE: PERSONAL COMPUTERS

10 DESCRIPTION

15 TECHNICAL FIELD

The invention relates to personal computers and more particularly to lap-top personal computers incorporating loudspeakers.

BACKGROUND ART

20 It is known from GB-A-2262861 to suggest a panel-form loudspeaker comprising:-

 a resonant multi-mode radiator element being a unitary sandwich panel formed of two skins of material with a spacing core of transverse cellular construction, wherein
25 the panel is such as to have ratio of bending stiffness (B), in all orientations, to the cube power of panel mass per unit surface area (μ) of at least 10;

 a mounting means which supports the panel or attaches

to it a supporting body, in a free undamped manner;

and an electro-mechanical drive means coupled to the panel which serves to excite a multi-modal resonance in the radiator panel in response to an electrical input within a
5 working frequency band for the loudspeaker.

DISCLOSURE OF INVENTION

Embodiments of the present invention use members of nature, structure and configuration achievable generally and/or specifically by implementing teachings of our co-
10 pending PCT application no. (our case P.5711) of even date herewith. Such members thus have capability to sustain and propagate input vibrational energy by bending waves in operative area(s) extending transversely of thickness often but not necessarily to edges of the member(s); are
15 configured with or without anisotropy of bending stiffness to have resonant mode vibration components distributed over said area(s) beneficially for acoustic coupling with ambient air; and have predetermined preferential locations or sites within said area for transducer means,
20 particularly operationally active or moving part(s) thereof effective in relation to acoustic vibrational activity in said area(s) and signals, usually electrical, corresponding to acoustic content of such vibrational activity. Uses are envisaged in co-pending International application No. (our
25 file P.5711) of even date herewith for such members as or in "passive" acoustic devices without transducer means, such as for reverberation or for acoustic filtering or for acoustically "voicing" a space or room; and as or in



"active" acoustic devices with transducer means, such as in a remarkably wide range of sources of sound or loudspeakers when supplied with input signals to be converted to said sound, or in such as microphones when exposed to sound to
5 be converted into other signals.

This invention is particularly concerned with active acoustic devices e.g. in the form of loudspeakers for personal lap-top computers.

Members as above are herein called distributed mode
10 acoustic radiators and are intended to be characterised as in the above PCT application and/or otherwise as specifically provided herein.

The invention is a lap-top computer comprising a combined keyboard and display screen, characterised by an
15 opposed pair of loudspeakers attached to the computer, and in that each loudspeaker comprises a distributed mode acoustic radiator having a transducer wholly and exclusively mounted thereon to vibrate the radiator to cause it to resonate. The loudspeakers may be mounted to
20 the display screen.

The loudspeakers may be hinged on the display screen.

The display screen may comprise a housing and the loudspeakers may each be housed in a slot in the display screen housing for sliding movement between a stored
25 position, in which the loudspeakers are substantially wholly housed in the slot, and a use position in which the loudspeakers are positioned on opposite sides of the display screen.



From another aspect, the invention is a lap-top computer comprising a keyboard and a display screen, characterised in that the display screen is, of forms part of a distributed mode acoustic radiator having a transducer
5 mounted wholly and exclusively thereon to vibrate the radiator to cause it to resonate. The display screen may comprise a liquid crystal display.

Each radiator may comprise a stiff lightweight panel having a cellular core sandwiched by opposed high modulus
10 skin layers, and the panel may be supported in a surrounding frame by means of a resilient suspension.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

The invention is diagrammatically illustrated, by way of example, in the accompanying drawings, in which:-

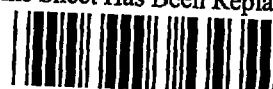
15 Figure 1 is a diagram showing a distributed-mode loudspeaker as described and claimed in our co-pending International application No. (our case P.5711);

Figure 2a is a partial section on the line A-A of Figure 1;

20 Figure 2b is an enlarged cross-section through a distributed mode radiator of the kind shown in Figure 2a and showing two alternative constructions;

Figure 3 is a perspective diagram of an embodiment of lap-top computer according to the present
25 invention, and

Figure 4 is a partial cross-sectional view of a detail of Figure 3.



BEST MODES FOR CARRYING OUT THE INVENTION

Referring to Figure 1 of the drawings, there is shown a panel-form loudspeaker (81) of the kind described and claimed in our co-pending International application No. (our case P.5711) of even date herewith comprising a
5 rectangular frame (1) carrying a resilient suspension (3) round its inner periphery which supports a distributed mode sound radiating panel (2). A transducer (9) e.g. as described in detail with reference to our co-pending International applications Nos. (our cases P.5683/4/5) of
10 even date herewith, is mounted wholly and exclusively on or in the panel (2) at a predetermined location defined by dimensions x and y , the position of which location is calculated as described in our co-pending International application No. (our case P.5711) of even date herewith,
15 to launch bending waves into the panel to cause the panel to resonate to radiate an acoustic output.

The transducer (9) is driven by a signal amplifier (10), e.g. an audio amplifier, connected to the transducer by conductors (28). Amplifier loading and power
20 requirements can be entirely normal, similar to conventional cone type speakers, sensitivity being of the order of 86 - 88dB/watt under room loaded conditions. Amplifier load impedance is largely resistive at 6 ohms, power handling 20-80 watts. Where the panel core and/or
25 skins are of metal, they may be made to act as a heat sink for the transducer to remove heat from the motor coil of the transducer and thus improve power handling.



Figures 2a and 2b are partial typical cross-sections through the loudspeaker (81) of Figure 1. Figure 2a shows that the frame (1), surround (3) and panel (2) are connected together by respective adhesive-bonded joints (20). Suitable materials for the frame include lightweight framing, e.g. picture framing of extruded metal e.g. aluminium alloy or plastics. Suitable surround materials include resilient materials such as foam rubber and foam plastics. Suitable adhesives for the joints (20) include epoxy, acrylic and cyano-acrylate etc. adhesives.

Figure 2b illustrates, to an enlarged scale, that the panel (2) is a rigid lightweight panel having a core (22) e.g. of a rigid plastics foam (97) e.g. cross linked polyvinylchloride or a cellular matrix (98) i.e. a honeycomb matrix of metal foil, plastics or the like, with the cells extending transversely to the plane of the panel, and enclosed by opposed skins (21) e.g. of paper, card, plastics or metal foil or sheet. Where the skins are of plastics, they may be reinforced with fibres e.g. of carbon, glass, Kevlar (RTM) or the like in a manner known per se to increase their modulus.

Envisaged skin layer materials and reinforcements thus include carbon, glass, Kevlar (RTM), Nomex (RTM) i.e. aramid etc. fibres in various lays and weaves, as well as paper, bonded paper laminates, melamine, and various synthetic plastics films of high modulus, such as Mylar (RTM), Kaptan (RTM), polycarbonate, phenolic, polyester or related plastics, and fibre reinforced plastics, etc. and

metal sheet or foil. Investigation of the Vectra grade of liquid crystal polymer thermoplastics shows that they may be useful for the injection moulding of ultra thin skins or shells of smaller size, say up to around 30cm diameter.

- 5 This material self forms an orientated crystal structure in the direction of injection, a preferred orientation for the good propagation of treble energy from the driving point to the panel perimeter.

Additional such moulding for this and other
10 thermoplastics allows for the mould tooling to carry location and registration features such as grooves or rings for the accurate location of transducer parts e.g. the motor coil, and the magnet suspension. Additional with some weaker core materials it is calculated that it would
15 be advantageous to increase the skin thickness locally e.g. in an area or annulus up to 150% of the transducer diameter, to reinforce that area and beneficially couple vibration energy into the panel. High frequency response will be improved with the softer foam materials by this
20 means.

Envisaged core layer materials include fabricated honeycombs or corrugations of aluminium alloy sheet or foil, or Kevlar (RTM), Nomex (RTM), plain or bonded papers, and various synthetic plastics films, as well as expanded
25 or foamed plastics or pulp materials, even aerogel metals if of suitably low density. Some suitable core layer materials effectively exhibit usable self-skinning in their manufacture and/or otherwise have enough inherent stiffness

for use without lamination between skin layers. A high performance cellular core material is known under the trade name 'Rohacell' which may be suitable as a radiator panel and which is without skins. In practical terms, the aim is
5 for an overall lightness and stiffness suited to a particular purpose, specifically including optimising contributions from core and skin layers and transitions between them.

Several of the preferred formulations for the panel
10 employ metal and metal alloy skins, or alternatively a carbon fibre reinforcement. Both of these, and also designs with an alloy Aerogel or metal honeycomb core, will have substantial radio frequency screening properties which should be important in several EMC applications.
15 Conventional panel or cone type speakers have no inherent EMC screening capability.

In addition the preferred form of piezo and electro dynamic transducers have negligible electromagnetic radiation or stray magnet fields. Conventional speakers
20 have a large magnetic field, up to 1 metre distant unless specific compensation counter measures are taken.

Where it is important to maintain the screening in an application, electrical connection can be made to the conductive parts of an appropriate DML panel or an
25 electrically conductive foam or similar interface may be used for the edge mounting.

The suspension (3) may damp the edges of the panel (2) to prevent excessive edge movement of the panel.

Additionally or alternatively, further damping may be applied, e.g. as patches, bonded to the panel in selected positions to damp excessive movement to distribute resonance equally over the panel. The patches may be of
5 bitumen-based material, as commonly used in conventional loudspeaker enclosures or may be of a resilient or rigid polymeric sheet material. Some materials, notably paper and card, and some cores may be self-damping. Where desired, the damping may be increased in the construction
10 of the panels by employing resiliently setting, rather than rigid setting adhesives.

Effective said selective damping includes specific application to the panel including its sheet material of means permanently associated therewith. Edges and corners
15 can be particularly significant for dominant and less dispersed low frequency vibration modes of panels hereof. Edge-wise fixing of damping means can usefully lead to a panel with its said sheet material fully framed, though their corners can often be relatively free, say for desired
20 extension to lower frequency operation. Attachment can be by adhesive or self-adhesive materials. Other forms of useful damping, particularly in terms of more subtle effects and/or mid- and higher frequencies can be by way of suitable mass or masses affixed to the sheet material at
25 predetermined effective medial localised positions of said area.

An acoustic panel as described above is bi-directional. The sound energy from the back is not

strongly phase related to that from the front. Consequently there is the benefit of overall summation of acoustic power in the room, sound energy of uniform frequency distribution, reduced reflective and standing
5 wave effects and with the advantage of superior reproduction of the natural space and ambience in the reproduced sound recordings.

While the radiation from the acoustic panel is largely non-directional, the percentage of phase related
10 information increases off axis. For improved focus for the phantom stereo image, placement of the speakers, like pictures, at the usual standing person height, confers the benefit of a moderate off-axis placement for the normally seated listener optimising the stereo effect. Likewise the
15 triangular left/right geometry with respect to the listener provides a further angular component. Good stereo is thus obtainable.

There is a further advantage for a group of listeners compared with conventional speaker reproduction. The
20 intrinsically dispersed nature of acoustic panel sound radiation gives it a sound volume which does not obey the inverse square law for distance for an equivalent point source. Because the intensity fall-off with distance is much less than predicted by inverse square law then
25 consequently for off-centre and poorly placed listeners the intensity field for the panel speaker promotes a superior stereo effect compared to conventional speakers. This is because the off-centre placed listener does not suffer the

doubled problem due to proximity to the nearer speaker; firstly the excessive increase in loudness from the nearer speaker, and then the corresponding decrease in loudness from the further loudspeaker.

5 There is also the advantage of a flat, lightweight panel-form speaker, visually attractive, of good sound quality and requiring only one transducer and no crossover for a full range sound from each panel diaphragm.

Figures 3 and 4 illustrate a lap-top personal computer
10 (128) having a keyboard (137) and a member (130) incorporating a visual display screen (129) and which member is provided with an opposed pair of loudspeakers (39,40) attached to the visual display member (130) to adapt the computer for multi-media applications and the
15 like.

The loudspeakers (39,40) are formed as thin rectangular panels which as indicated at (39) and by arrow 'A' may be slid from the position of use indicated in the drawing into a storage position in the member (130) through
20 a slot (82). Alternatively, as indicated at (40) and by arrow 'B' the loudspeaker panel may be folded about hinges (34) from the position of use indicated in the drawing to a storage position in which the panel (40) overlies the screen member (130).

25 Each of the loudspeakers (39,40) is formed as a lightweight multi-mode acoustic radiator of the kind described above with reference to Figures 1 and 2. Thus each loudspeaker (39,40) comprises a stiff lightweight

panel (2) having a cellular core (22) skinned on both sides with surface sheets (21), the panel (2) being supported at its periphery on a resilient suspension (3) of an elastomeric material which in turn is supported in a

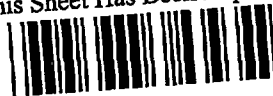
5 lightweight surrounding frame (1), e.g. of plastics. A transducer (9) is mounted on each panel (39,40) at a predetermined position discussed more fully in our co-

10 pending International application No. (our file P.5711), to launch bending waves into the panel (2) to produce an acoustic output. The transducer (9) may be of the kinds described in our co--pending International application Nos. (our files P.5683/4/5).

A decorative lightweight cover (not shown) may be positioned over the panel (2) surround (3) and frame (1) to

15 obscure the loudspeaker.

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CLAIMS

1. A lap-top computer comprising a keyboard and a display screen, characterised in that the display screen is, or forms part of, a distributed mode acoustic radiator
5 loudspeaker having a transducer mounted wholly and exclusively thereon to vibrate the radiator to cause it to resonate to produce an acoustic output.
2. A lap-top computer comprising a keyboard and display screen, characterised by an opposed pair of panel-form
10 loudspeakers attached to the computer, and in that each loudspeaker comprises a distributed mode acoustic radiator having a transducer wholly and exclusively mounted thereon to vibrate the radiator to cause it to resonate.
3. A lap-top computer according to claim 2, characterised
15 in that the loudspeakers are mounted to the display screen.
4. A lap-top computer according to claim 3, characterised in that the loudspeakers are hinged on the display screen.
5. A lap-top computer according to claim 3, characterised in that the display screen comprises a housing and in that
20 the loudspeakers are each housed in a slot in the display screen housing for sliding movement between a stored position, in which the loudspeakers are substantially wholly housed in the slot, and a use position in which the loudspeakers are positioned on opposite sides of the
25 display screen
6. A lap-top computer according to any preceding claim, characterised in that each radiator comprises a stiff lightweight panel having a cellular core sandwiched by



opposed skin layers.

7. A lap-top computer according to any preceding claim, characterised in that the panel is supported in a surrounding frame.

5 8. A lap-top computer according to claim 7, characterised by means of a resilient suspension supporting the panel in the frame.

