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# 3-Way Active Crossover with Balanced XLR Jacks

## Model XOVER-3B

### User's Manual

Rev 1.0

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Xkitz.com

#### **Features**

- 3-way Active Crossover for driving separate subwoofer, midrange and tweeter amplifiers
- Fully balanced inputs and outputs via XLR jacks
- Precision impedance matched differential (+) and (-) input and output signals
- Linkwitz-Riley crossover, 4<sup>th</sup> order, 24dB/Octave roll-off
- Perfect for Tri-Amping your sound system
- Crossover frequency configuration components are on two socketed modules - quick and easy to change the XO frequencies by simply plugging in new modules
- Wide range of standard XO frequency modules are offered by Xkitz
- Baffle Step Compensation, optional, adjustable and configurable to support various baffle sizes
- Specifications:
  - Mid/High THD, THD+N: < 0.070%, < 0.088%
  - Sub-Woofer THD, THD+N: < 0.0020%, < 0.020%
  - Frequency Response: Linear from 10Hz - 200KHz
  - CMRR (balanced input): > 55dB
  - Input Impedance: 40K ohms balanced
  - Input Overload: 3.8V peak-to-peak
  - Voltage Gain: Adjustable Sub, Mid and High, 12dB Balanced
  - Filter Topology: Linkwitz-Riley, Constant Voltage, 4<sup>th</sup> Order, 24dB/Octave
  - Power supply: Bi-polar +/- 20-24V, We recommend the [XAPS-10WB](#) power supply
  - Supply Current: 100mA
- Channels are phase aligned to within a fraction of a degree to minimize distortion near the XO frequency
- Separate Sub, Mid and High output level adjustments via on-board multi-turn trim-pots
- Filtered LDO regulator for high power supply noise rejection, ultra clean audio
- This is a mono device, two units are needed for stereo operation
- PCB dimensions: 4.125" x 2.5" x 1.125" height

## **What's an Active Crossover and Why Do I Need It?**

Most speaker boxes have an electronic circuit inside them called a crossover. Its job is to split the sound into frequency ranges; it sends the low frequency sounds to the woofer, and the high frequency sounds to the tweeter. This is important because each of the loudspeakers is built to produce certain frequency ranges, and they don't sound very good outside of their proper range.

In fact, loudspeakers can actually distort within their natural frequency range if they are also presented with frequencies outside their natural range. In other words if you send low frequencies to your tweeter, the high frequency sound reproduced by the tweeter will be distorted by the presence of the low frequency signal.

When you separate the frequencies with a crossover, each loudspeaker is able to focus on producing only the frequencies that they're designed to produce.

Most speaker boxes you see have **passive crossovers**, which are made up of some inductors and capacitors that filter the low frequencies from the highs. But passive crossovers have a number of very significant drawbacks. One big problem with passive crossovers is they don't have a very sharp **roll-off**. This means that some of the bass frequency energy will still reach the tweeter, and some of the treble energy will still reach the woofer. Another major disadvantage with passive crossovers is efficiency; they waste a huge amount of the power you're amplifier is providing. High frequency sounds are prevented from going to the woofer (and low frequencies prevented from going to the tweeter) by essentially just shorting them out; so power is wasted in the form of heat dissipated in the crossover components.

But by far the biggest problem with passive crossovers is that they significantly degrade the quality of the signals that pass through them by introducing distortion in the following ways:

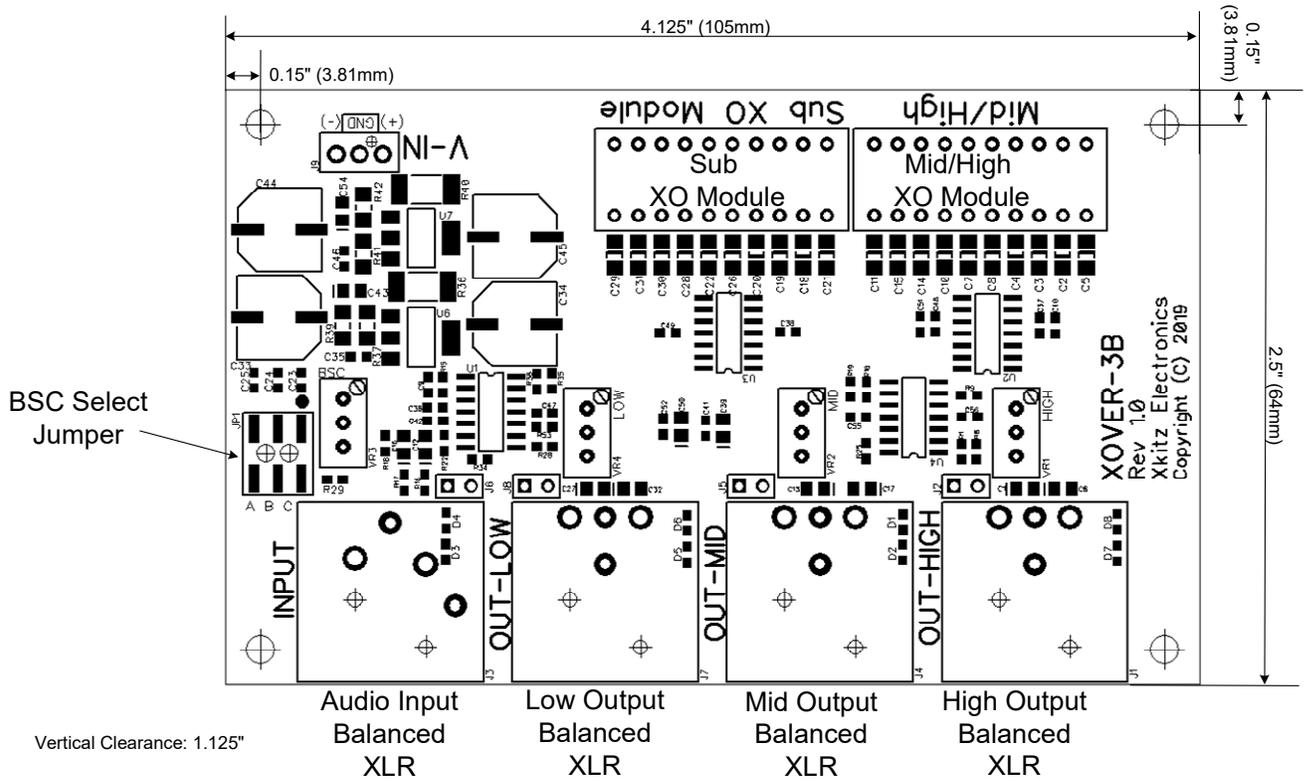
- Channel phasing: Once the crossover splits the audio signal, the woofer and tweeter signals will be out of phase from each other (which means one leads or lags the other). This causes distortion at and around the crossover frequency because at these frequencies both the tweeter and the woofer will be driven, but each will be at a different phase. At various points of time in the wave the woofer and tweeter will be either fighting one another or re-enforcing one another. This leads to a muddying of the sound definition.
- Channel Cross-talk due to Back-EMF: The mass of the loudspeaker cones will continue to move in the direction they are being driven by the amplifier for a short period of time after the signal changes direction, and this induces currents in the voice coils that couple back into the passive crossover and causes unpredictable non-linear crosstalk between the channels of the crossover.
- Frequency response degradation: any time you put large capacitors and inductors in series or parallel with your audio signal it will invariably affect frequency response of the signals. The ways in which this can happen depend on the design of the crossover and the characteristics of the loudspeakers. The nature of this distortion is so complex it becomes almost impossible to accurately model.

All of this adds significant distortion to the final sound emitted. Audio engineers for decades have tried in vain to come up with ever more complex passive filter arrangements to try and resolve, or mask, these inherent problems.

An **active crossover**, like the XOVER-3B, on the other hand, is built from the highest quality operational amplifiers (op-amps) and the filter functions are applied to the high impedance, line-level preamp input instead of the low impedance, high voltage level amplifier output. Active filters have a much sharper roll-off, 24dB/octave, allowing each of the loudspeakers to perfectly focus on producing just the frequencies they are designed to handle. Active crossovers are also more efficient from a power standpoint because of the fact that the filters are applied in the line-level audio input signal; only the energy meant for a particular driver is sent to the amplifier that drives it, so there is no waste. But the biggest advantage of active crossovers is the sound quality. A vanishingly small amount of noise and distortion is introduced in the op-amp filter circuits, on the order of 0.00005% total harmonic distortion.

All of this results in extremely clean, precise, and well defined audio output to your amplifiers.

**Figure 1. PCB Dimensions and Mode Selection Jumpers:**



## **Customizing Your Crossover Frequency**

The mid/high and subwoofer crossover (XO) frequencies are determined by the values of the resistors on the two 20-pin socketed component carriers called the 'XO Modules'. All 10 resistors on each module are set to a particular value to control the filters' frequency responses.

Xkitz offers a wide range of standard XO Module frequencies here:

<https://www.xkitz.com/collections/active-crossovers-and-bi-amplifiers-1/products/xo-module-for-use-with-XOVER-2-and-xamps>

Or you can select your own custom XO frequency resistor values with our filter calculator tool at:

<http://www.xkitzconnect.com/files/Linkwitz-Riley-2Way-Calculator.htm>

Just enter your desired mid/high crossover frequency. Then hit the 'Calc' button. It will give you the suggested resistor value for your mid/high crossover, and it will show a schematic diagram of the crossover. Then enter the value of your chosen sub-woofer crossover frequency and hit 'Calc' again to get the values for your sub-woofer XO module. You may have to round the suggested values to standard available resistor values. High precision (1% or better) resistors are recommended to minimize distortion.

**Caution! The XO Modules are fragile!** The module's pins will break off if bent too far. To remove the module from the socket, use a flat screwdriver to gently pry the module straight upward (away from the PCB). Insert the screwdriver between the module and the socket, and gently rock it side to side until the module lifts from the socket.

## **Selecting Your Ideal Crossover Frequency**

Consult the specifications of your loudspeakers to select your ideal XO frequency. Every loudspeaker has its own ideal operating frequency range. Woofers, of course, work well in the low frequency range, but as frequency increases their performance deteriorates. Same for tweeters; they operate well at upper frequency ranges and deteriorate as the frequency comes down. Your crossover frequency should be somewhere near the mid-point between points where both the woofer and the tweeter are still solidly within their ideal operating frequency range.

## **Power Supply Requirements**

The XOVER-3B requires a bi-polar (positive and negative) DC voltage source in the range of 20V to 24V max. Even though the board has an LDO voltage regulator that will filter out most noise from your input power supply, you should try to select a power supply with a clean DC output to ensure your audio is clean.

Xkitz recommends the [XAPS-10WB](#) bi-polar power supply, designed specifically to power the XOVER-3B. It can support either 115V or 230V AC input, and includes modular cables that plug directly into the XOVER-3B.

The XOVER-3B draws less than 100mA from the supply.

## **Baffle Step Compensation (BSC)**

The Baffle Step Compensation circuit, or BSC, if you choose to use it, allows you to apply a low pass filter function to the audio signal to compensate for a phenomenon where sounds above a certain frequency (determined by the size of the baffle, or the front of your speaker box) are actually reflected by the front of the speaker enclosure. Sounds that fall below that frequency do not get reflected, but instead wrap around the back of the speaker enclosure. This has the effect of reducing the magnitude of the lower frequencies. Your ear hears the primary waves plus the reflected waves on the highs, but only the primary waves of the lows. The BSC circuit, by applying a low pass filter, will roll off some of the highs to restore the overall sound to a more natural, linear state. Check the web for more detailed description of BSC.

The VR3 precision 20-turn trim-pot allows the BSC magnitude to be adjusted. Turning the pot 20 full revolutions counter-clockwise reduces the BSC magnitude to the point of being entirely disabled. Turning it clockwise increases the BSC magnitude to a maximum of 6dB. In other words, it increases the amount of attenuation of the higher frequencies to 6dB below the lower frequencies. This compensates for the theoretical 6dB attenuation of the low frequencies due to the baffle step.

**Table 1. Baffle Step Compensation**

<b>Baffle Width (in Inches)</b>	<b>Baffle Step Freq.</b>	<b>JP1 Jumper Setting</b>
Less than 10"	507Hz	"A"
10" - 16"	351Hz	"B"
Greater than 16"	240Hz	"C"

## **Initial Power-up and Calibration**

Before applying power for the first time, it's a good idea to make sure the Sub, Mid, High and BSC are fully disabled. The trim-pots are high precision, 20 turn pots, so in order to ensure the Sub, Mid, High and BSC are fully OFF you need to turn all four trim-pots 20 full revolutions counter-clockwise.

There are a number of different methods to calibrate a 3-way active crossover. Below is the method we generally prefer. We like to first set the Sub and Mid levels to roughly unity gain (output level same as input) using a voltmeter or an oscilloscope, then gradually raise the level of the high channel and set the ideal level exclusively by ear or a spectrum analyzer. There is generally a large difference in the efficiencies of woofers and tweeters, so there is no ideal ratio between the Sub, Mid and High levels. Using this method, you end up with an overall insertion gain of 0dB, and you can easily reach an ideal balance between drivers with differing levels of efficiency using only a volt meter.

In a stereo system, you'll want to try and calibrate both L and R at the same time to maintain a close balance of the L and R volume levels.

1. Use a signal generator of some kind to inject a sine wave into the crossover. Free signal generator apps are widely available for any smart phone or on the PC. Either connect it directly to the input of the crossover, or if your crossover is part of your larger system, simply connect it to any line input and select it to drive the crossovers.
2. Set the level of the signal generator (or the volume of your system) to maximum level.
3. Set the frequency of the signal generator to around 50Hz or 60Hz.
4. Using a voltmeter or oscilloscope, measure the signal level of the crossover's input signal(s). You can measure this across pins 2 and 3 of the XLR jacks from your preamp before plugging into the crossover.
5. Begin raising the level of the Low or Mid channel (depending on your Low/Mid XO point) while monitoring the crossover Low (or Mid) output (pins 2 and 3 of the XLR output jack). Raise the Low (or Mid) level until the output voltage is equal to the input level from step 4.
6. Now that you have your Low or Mid channels set to 0dB gain, it's time to set the other levels. Connect your normal audio signal source and set the volume to a comfortable listening level. Either use a spectrum analyzer (free smart phone or PC apps are available) or just use your ears to monitor the audio from your speakers. Since the HIGH levels are still set to zero, the sound will start out dull and lacking in any high frequencies. Slowly raise the HIGH level control pot until your treble levels are flat on the spectrum analyzer, or until they sound natural by ear. You may want to adjust the L and R in isolation so that you can make sure both are dialed in properly, without the other channel interfering. Repeat for the Low channel.
7. Now slowly raise the BSC pot until your bass response sounds natural, or the lows below the baffle step frequency look flat on the spectrum analyzer (see table 3).

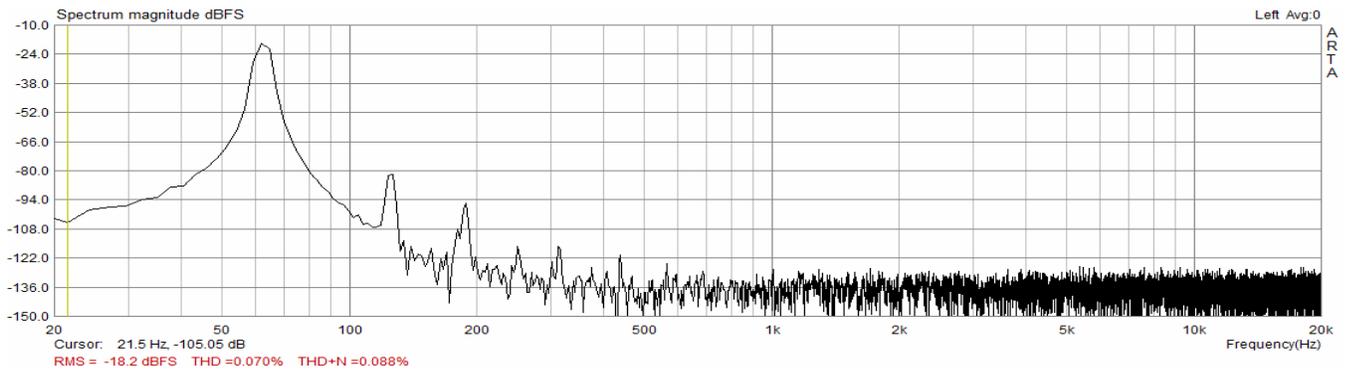
## Troubleshooting

If you're having trouble with your device, check Table 2 for possible cause and solution.

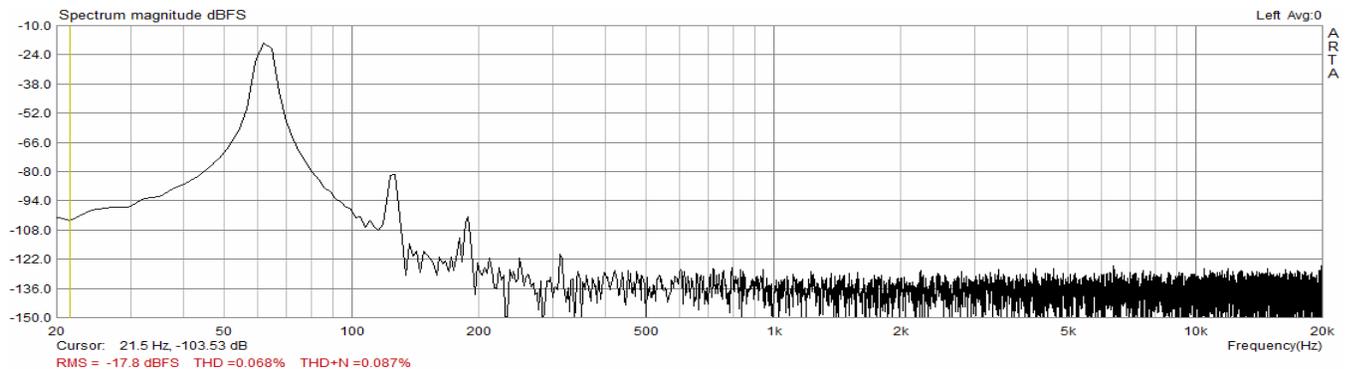
**Table 2. Troubleshooting Guide**

Problem	Possible Cause	Solution
No activity - circuit doesn't seem to do anything	Power supply not working, no input signal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verify DC voltage input is applied and connected OK</li> <li>• Check line level signal wiring</li> </ul>
Sounds bad, muffled	Woofers/Tweeters swapped	If the woofer and tweeter driver wires get swapped, it will sound very bad, check your wiring.
60Hz audible hum, or other audible noise	Grounding problems, noise on the DC supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure all you're audio source, crossover, amplifier, and any other components are solidly grounded to earth ground</li> <li>• Try driving the crossover with a couple of 9V batteries in series, if the hum goes away then there may be noise on your DC power supply.</li> </ul>

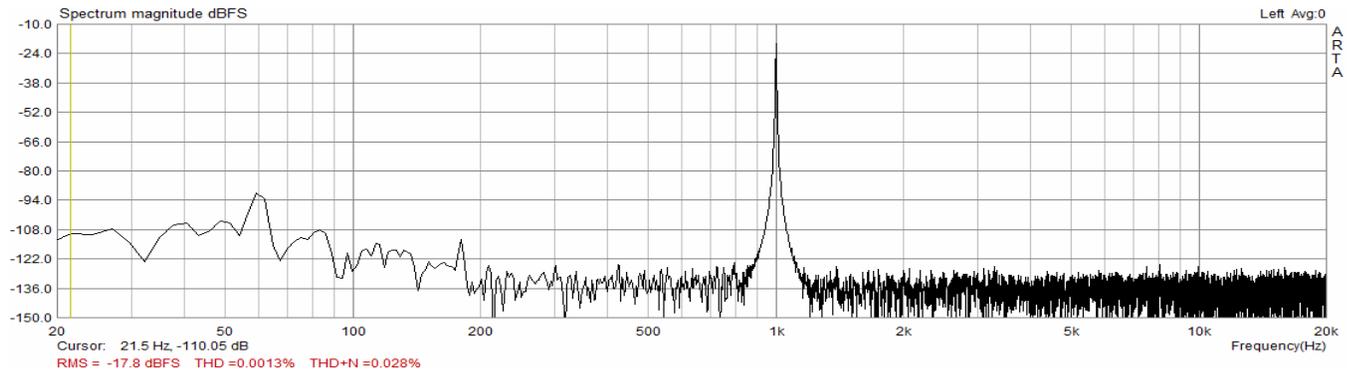
**Figure 2. Sub-Woofers Output, 60Hz XO Frequency, THD = 0.070%, THD+N = 0.088%**



**Figure 3. Mid-Range Output, 60Hz XO Frequency, THD = 0.068%, THD+N = 0.087%**



**Figure 4. Mid-Range Output, 1000Hz XO Frequency, THD = 0.0013%, THD+N = 0.028%**



**Figure 5. Tweeter Output, 1000Hz XO Frequency, THD = 0.0019%, THD+N = 0.015%**

