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BEST BUY

This premium subwoofer from US outfit Perlisten appeals to low-frequency lover **Richard Stevenson**

Push, pull and pulverise

Perlisten was formed in 2016 by a group of audio engineers, its first products coming to market in 2020. And those four years of R&D seem to have been well spent, resulting in a portfolio of rather interesting and highly regarded high-end loudspeakers and subwoofers. The brand also boasts the accolade of being the first to have speaker products awarded THX Dominus certification for large rooms. It means business.

We've already looked at – and loved – Perlisten's top-flight S series speakers (HCC #331), the step-down R series (HCC #338), and its flagship D215s subwoofer (HCC #334). Of course, that latter model, at over 800mm tall and weighing in at a hefty 92kg, isn't for everyone; certainly no one who is not into power-lifting or, like myself, owns a projector screen mounted only 700mm above the floor. Enter the D212s, auditioned here.

This subwoofer is very similar to the D215s, just scaled down a bit. It again features two drivers in a push-pull configuration, but this time they are 12in designs, rather than two 15s. Also again, they are arranged at right angles in a sealed enclosure. As always, the idea behind using dual drivers is an increased surface area to deliver greater SPLs, here down to a claimed 15Hz at -6dB.

As the lower driver is face-in to the enclosure and firing upwards, the D212s incorporates an extensively vented 'plinth' section beneath the main cabinet, giving rise to a design that is considerably taller than it is wide or deep. At 668mm high, it may have fitted neatly under my screen, and the 420mm width actually makes it look pretty compact compared to some wide-body competition at this premium price point, but you would never call it small, not least because it's also 550mm deep.

Still, viewed front-on it looks great and there's a rock-solid feel to its build. The deep, round-edged front baffle, finished in satin black, adds to the narrow illusion and draws the eye to the sub's continuous profile carbon cone and massive rubber roll surround. Above and below this are lugs for a grille which is an optional extra at £170. I never use grilles and they always languish in the box, but at £7,000 for the D212s one might expect them to be included.

The main cabinet is subwoofer-de-jour piano black, with a perfect peel-free finish, and a small LCD touch-screen display set into the top surface for basic menu

functions. Metal grilles cover ports on the front and sides of the lower section to vent the rear of the lower driver.

App control

The D212s' rear panel is frugally appointed with connections and controls. With setup handled by the LCD panel menu and Perlisten's app, traditional knobbery is not required and there are no high-level connections. You get left/right inputs and outputs on both RCA and balanced XLR, a 12V trigger and a USB service port. That leaves a lot of rear plate to show off the THX Dominus logo.

THX is far removed from the company founded by George Lucas many moons ago, but its latest Dominus spec is not to be sniffed at, as the engineering required to hit the benchmarks is complex. Yet Perlisten has done the job, its solution combining a clever driver configuration with a stupendously powerful 3kW-rated amplifier and some serious number-crunching power from an ARM Cortex-M4 processor running 48-bit DSP.

On the back of the DSP is a fine-adjustment 10-band parametric equaliser, albeit without any automatic built-in setup or measurement. I would have thought integrating room measurement based on the app and even using the smart device mic would have been a given, yet Perlisten insists that is not the best or most accurate way of EQ-ing your sub. It suggests using some higher-tech hardware (PC, calibrated mic, etc) and third-party software such as REW to measure the output and then adjust the EQ manually.

Also, there's the likelihood that a partnering processor or AVR is going to be running a full-range EQ system (Audyssey MultEQ-X, Dirac Live, etc) that will handle the subwoofer channel anyway. Still, the D212s' EQ is there if you feel the need to do some nerd-level tweaker. Thankfully, that is not required for basic setup and use, which is delightfully straightforward.

AV INFO

PRODUCT:
2 x 12in subwoofer with THX Dominus certification

POSITION:
One rung down from Perlisten's D215s range-topper

PEERS:
REL No.31; KEF Reference 8b; SVS PB16-Ultra



1. There are two 12in carbon fibre woofers in play here, but only one is seen from the front

2. Control and setup can be managed through Perlisten's Bluetooth app

3. The sub offers a balanced XLR connection for high-end processors/AV receivers

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SPECIFICATIONS

DRIVE UNITS: 2 x 12in long-excursion carbon fibre woofers **ENCLOSURE:** Sealed, push-pull configuration **ONBOARD POWER (CLAIMED):** 3,000W ('short term' RMS) Class D **FREQUENCY RESPONSE (CLAIMED):** 15Hz-231Hz (-6dB, Boost EQ) **REMOTE CONTROL:** No. Smart device app instead **DIMENSIONS:** 420(w) x 668(h) x 550(d)mm **WEIGHT:** 68kg

FEATURES: Stereo/LFE line-level on both unbalanced RCA and balanced XLR; RCA and XLR line-level output; 0-270-degree variable phase; 30Hz-160Hz low-pass filter; 32-bit ARM Cortex M4 processor; 48-bit DSP engine; 2.4in LCD touchscreen display; iOS and Android app with preset EQs (THX, Boost and Cut) and 10-band parametric EQ; Certified THX Dominus; 12V trigger; USB service port

TESTED WITH



THE BATMAN: This 4K Blu-ray for Robert Pattinson's caped crusader debut could be the one test disc to rule them all (to mix movie metaphors), with moody HDR visuals that challenge any display and a soundtrack so detailed and dynamic it will give every speaker, and particularly your sub, a real workout.

The top panel touchscreen will get you going should you be bereft of a smart device temporarily, but the elegance is in the Perlisten app. This allows the individual control of up to eight subwoofers, with trim levels, phase in one-degree steps from 0-270 degrees, polarity, delay from 0-100ms, low-pass slopes from 0dB-24dB/octave, and several standard EQ presets to fit some generic room shapes, alongside the manual 10-band EQ.

Waking the neighbours

I manhandled the D212s into the front corner and spent some time failing to get it dialled perfectly into the system. Its prodigious output and ludicrous LF response turned my 40 cubic metre room into a giant resonating box that I am sure neighbours in the next village appreciated.

'Breathtakingly fast and stomach-churningly deep, with a dynamic punch so sharp that it's got edges'

Slipping the sub out of the corner, using the handy supplied carpet-slider feet, and a third of the way along the front wall was revelatory. LFE and bass notes tightened up quite literally like a drum skin, creating a 'wowzer!' vibe even before I had approached any EQ system. Running MultEQ-X on my reference Denon AVC-A1H AVR showed the D212s to have probably the flattest in-room response I have ever seen in my cinema. The receiver applied the lightest of trims, but I am not sure I could have identified the sonic difference either way.

Testing began in grin-inducing earnest, the D212s delivering the biggest, tightest, hardest-hitting bass from any sub that has had the pleasure of gracing my room. It digs very deep, and the control is phenomenal, particularly as I was anticipating a little LF bloat from the lower vented part of the cabinet. It defines the subwoofering term 'slam' in capital letters with three exclamation marks.

Netflix's *FUBAR* is the sort of tongue-in-cheek action that rocks my cinematic boat and its Atmos mix is

hilariously good fun. The second episode starts with our intrepid CIA heroes rescued by an incoming helicopter unloading machine gun rounds. The scene was a festival of gunfire with the D212s driving home each shot with a hugely deep and satisfying percussive thump.

Switching to something altogether darker and moodier, *The Batman* (4K Blu-ray) is rich with subtle, deep effects that lesser subs will either miss or make sound woolly and unrealistic. With the low vibration of subway trains in the distance and the rumble of car engines ticking over, the D212s created a subtle sub-sonic picture that underpinned the dystopian feel of Gotham.

The darkness of the subway before the 'I'm vengeance' fight scene was wholly enveloping thanks to the subwoofer's deep presence and the soundtrack's rich tapestry of effects. The tension is built with LF pressure as Batman emerges from the shadows to the heavyweight classical score, his footsteps thumping into the wet platform concrete. The D212s didn't miss a beat or turn any of the effects into an oppressive noise, even with the gain or overall volume way above ASBO level.

The better bet?

Joining the exalted company of the D215s, the smaller D212s offers a similarly superb performance and does so in a more compact design that's more suited to UK-sized listening rooms. Unless you have a cavern-sized cinema, I'd say it was probably the better bet of the two.

The app is a joy to use and makes tweaking mid-movie a breeze, and the styling, build and finish are faultless. And the performance? Breathtakingly fast and stomach-churningly deep, with a level of control that delivers a dynamic punch so crisp and sharp that it's got edges. Probably the ultimate home cinema sub at the price ■

4. Peek through the vents on the D212s' piano black chassis to spy the second woofer

HCC VERDICT



Perlisten D212s

→ £7,000 → www.perlisten.com

WE SAY: No high-level inputs or automatic EQ, but the D212s delivers staggeringly fast and dynamic LFE with unrivalled punch and control.