

PRO MOBILE

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QSC KS118

BY PETER HOLDING



MSRP: £1,449.00

WWW.QSC.COM

Are you a DJ who likes to use subs? If you are, then you are going to love the new QSC KS118. This is all the sub you'll ever need as a mobile DJ!

The first time I ever heard bass properly was at my first concert. And who wouldn't be impressed with the sight and sound of Thin Lizzy at their peak? That unbelievable low-down thunder, combined with a thumping kickdrum – it underpins everything, and provides a beautiful sonic map for all the other instruments to follow. Lou Reed once said, "If you don't have the bass, it's like being amputated!"

If you have great full-range speakers you don't need subs, I hear you say. And some do get away with it. But, as an experiment, add a decent sub alongside your current speakers and listen to the difference. It's startling. Especially in environments which eat sound – huge rooms, the outdoors, large crowds or any combination of these. Bass speakers give your music legs!

The QSC KS118 sub replaces the brand's highly regarded KW181 model. Designed to produce a huge amount of sound from a compact and easily manoeuvred cabinet, it is ideal for mobile DJs looking to enhance their bass for larger events. With a maximum rated SPL of 136 dB @ 1 metre, an 18-inch cone driven by a 3600-Watt (peak) class D amplifier, the sound this sub produces took me back to those days I stood open-mouthed staring at Phil Lynott becoming one with thunder from the bowels of the earth!

In terms of design, there is beauty in this speaker's simplicity. There are no quirky design features, just nice clean lines and everything exactly where it should be. The already installed, low-noise casters are essential – each unit weighs in at 47kg – and make the cabinets easy to transport into position, while the pair of recessed handles help with lifting into and out of your vehicle.

This simplicity carries on with the unit's connectivity and control panel, which is located on the rear (the same side as the castors). The pair of inputs are both combination ¼-inch jack / XLR sockets, while a corresponding pair of XLR pass-through connections is also included. The main power IEC input socket features a V-Lock, which ensures your cable will not easily be disconnected by stray feet or other accidental means. There's then a power switch, gain knob and a pair of indicator LEDs (power and limiter) but everything else is taken care of by a multi-function digital display that provides access to an intuitive menu interface.



QSC KS118

It is possible to use these subs in a number of ways, depending on the application, event, venue and other equipment in use. Incredibly clever internal DSP processing and programming allows them to be set up in a range of ways and optimised accordingly simply by selecting a menu option. For my test, I went completely traditional: a sub placed at each side of my setup. For a more effective sound, it would have been better to place them together, in the middle, right in front of the dancefloor. But that would have needed an entirely different stage area.

Had I been in a position to place them together, my options would have included the ability to change the units from an omni-directional to a cardioid coverage pattern. This involves positioning two cabinets back-to-back (or stacked, facing in opposite directions) to achieve cancellation in the rear-firing energy and reinforcement of the forward-facing energy. Normally you would need to do quite a lot of complicated calculations to setup the correct physical spacing and signal processing to effectively achieve this, but the KS118 facilitates it through easy to select pre-sets.

The menu interface also makes it easy to switch the frequency of the internal crossover between 80Hz and 100Hz to best suit the tops you are using. You can also set up delay of up to 100 milliseconds. This is displayed on the menu as time and also distance (in both feet and metres), which makes it a lot easier to understand. Finally, there is also a 'DEEP' mode, which boosts low-frequency extension below 60Hz.

Once you have everything setup the way you want it, it's also possible to save user-defined 'scenes' via the menu. This is perfect for if you have different setups for different sizes of venue, allowing you to switch between using these subs in different ways for your different rigs extremely easily and quickly.

For my test, I was in a room which can accommodate more than 500 guests. So it needs properly big speakers. I combined a pair of KS118s with a pair of QSC's K12.2 12-inch tops, mounted using 35mm M20 loudspeaker poles (not included). The event I used them at was a wedding, not always an occasion where huge sound is needed. However, the groom and a large number of the couples' guests are members of live bands, so it was great to have more sound than I needed. The party really kicked off but I always had headroom to spare!

The sound, as expected, was very pleasing. The low-end delivered by the KS118 subs was deep, clear, and

capable of filling the room with plenty to spare. The smart looks and obvious punch got a lot of attention from the musicians in the room. Of course, I was on the 'wrong side' of the speakers to get the full benefit from their sound, though I did often sneak round the front to listen to them with several different tracks playing. Sound engineers (and DJs) all have our favourite selection of songs to 'sonically' test speakers. I personally find that Dizzee Rascal's 'Bonkers' will really show subs for what they are worth, and oh boy. I basked in the audio experience, appreciating the depth and warmth of sound, until I suddenly realised that I should probably think about mixing in the next song – it was too easy to just stand and admire!

The full-range speakers I use for 80% of the parties I play at are perfect for those occasions – around 100 or so people in a not huge room. However, for any occasion where I need properly big sound, the QSC KS118s are a great answer and, I believe, will cope with whatever I could possibly throw at them. My only regret is I didn't actually think to test them with the best: 'Dancing in the Moonlight', I'm sure Phil's work would have sounded fantastic!

