



Larger than life

A new model to headline Perlisten's 'entry-level' R series of subwoofers, the R18s benefits from the company's first 18in driver. **Mark Craven** introduces it to the King of Atlantis

STEPPING UP TO the plate weighing 57.3kg, measuring a chunky 57cm wide and deep, and bothering your bank account to the tune of £5,000, Perlisten's R18s subwoofer easily outguns some companies' top-of-the-range models. But for the American manufacturer, it counts as one of its second-tier options, less desirable than a dual-driver subwoofer from its premium D series.

Or maybe not. By debuting Perlisten's first 18in woofer, the R18s gives the R series something to shout about beyond simply being 'more affordable'. And it also promises some good old-fashioned low-frequency lunacy.

Tiny?

As alluded to, this is a relatively big beast, certainly not worthy of Perlisten's 'tiny frame, mighty bass' description. I'm aware that houses and listening rooms in its homeland are bigger than they are in the UK, but to describe any subwoofer that stands 61cm high and requires help getting it out of the box as 'tiny' is pushing it.

At least it looks the part thanks to Perlisten's now familiar styling. The cubic nature of the R18s's main

cabinet is softened by the rounded edges of its front baffle, and the sub's satin black finish is smart too. As usual, there's a grille available to hide the front-firing driver, but as this is an optional extra I can't see many bothering to buy one.

The brains of the operation

In terms of features, this model is cut from the same cloth as its R series siblings, and indeed Perlisten's D series. As the company's chief technology officer Eric Wiederholtz explains [see p30], the underlying electronics platform remains unchanged between the two ranges, so the R18s features the same ARM Cortex-M4 processor and 48-bit DSP platform, and offers the same app control/calibration. The latter has been covered before [see HCC #344], so I will quickly tell you it features preset EQs (THX, Boost/Large Room and Cut/Small Room), manual 10-band parametric adjustment, and control of crossover, phase, level and more. Backing this up is a 2.4in colour touchpanel built into the sub's top, but the rest of the subwoofer offers little – on the back you'll find only a power socket,

AV INFO

PRODUCT:
Sealed subwoofer
with 18in driver

POSITION:
Top model in
Perlisten's entry-
level R Series

PEERS:
Velodyne DD18+;
SVS SB16-Ultra;
Ascendo The 18 Sub

trigger and service ports, and a choice of XLR and RCA inputs and outputs.

The R18s's driver is another of Perlisten's glass-fibre designs, married to a 1,000W amp. The cabinet is sealed, which is a feature of all the brand's subwoofers. 'Ports add a ton of group delay,' says Wiederholtz. 'That's physics'.

Wet and wild

My audition of the R18s coincided with that of Primare's SP25 Prisma processor [see p44], and I was grateful for the latter's Dirac Live room correction. Even under Dirac's authoritative grip, Perlisten's subwoofer sounded borderline bonkers at times, delivering film LFE with grin-inducing levels of slam, depth and scale.

Aquaman: The Lost Kingdom (4K Blu-ray) opens with pounding bass sounds as sailors are thrown against the wall of their ship by some (soon to be very sorry) pirates, letting you know the film's Atmos track is going to be very similar to the first. Then, when our hero lands on the deck, the effect again hits *hard*, the R18's bass sounding big in a way that other subwoofers just don't.

Queue Steppenwolf's 'Born to be Wild', serving as a backdrop to the scrap and Aquaman's voiceover. Here, the 18in driver sounds less in control of the song's bass guitar as it does the slamming LFE of the movie mix, which probably indicates where the R18s's ambitions lie.

Subjectively, this model's output is not quite as intrinsically 'pure' as Perlisten's more well-to-do D series models. Stepping up to an 18in driver and abandoning the push-pull configuration has loosened the reins, so that I wouldn't consider this model an obvious partner in a 2.1 music system. But in an AV environment, with bass management on hand to tighten up impact sounds and blend the sub with the main speakers, you end up with a performance made for home cinema.

Skip to Chapter 4 and we're underwater during the raid on the storage vault. Various submersible craft are driven forward upon rolling waves of LFE. Nicole Kidman comes under laser fire, the meaty blasts punching through the soundmix. A crashing ship causes a jittery LFE rumble that loads the room, and I can feel my floor vibrate, while later sounds of Mira punching her way through glass are tighter, higher register and hit more in the chest.



SPECIFICATIONS

DRIVE UNITS: 1 x 18in glass fibre woofer **ENCLOSURE:** Sealed **ONBOARD POWER (CLAIMED):** 1,000W (RMS) Class D **FREQUENCY RESPONSE (CLAIMED):** 14Hz-340Hz (-10dB) **REMOTE CONTROL:** No. App/LCD touchscreen **DIMENSIONS:** 618(h) x 570(w) x 575(d)mm **WEIGHT:** 57.3kg

FEATURES: LFE line-level input on both unbalanced RCA and balanced XLR; RCA and XLR line-level output; level control; polarity switch; 0-270-degree variable phase; 30Hz-160Hz low-pass filter; 32-bit ARM Cortex M4 processor; 48-bit TI DSP engine; 2.4in LCD colour touchscreen display; iOS and Android remote app with preset EQs (THX, Boost and Cut) and 10-band parametric EQ; auto-on; 12V trigger; satin black finish

TESTED WITH



AQUAMAN: THE LOST KINGDOM: The first iteration of the DCEU went out on a high after a few damp squibs with this fun standalone sequel for Jason Momoa's beer-swilling superhero. Like the first flick, its 4K Blu-ray release can be considered demo-grade for its HDR-infused visuals and expansive Atmos sound design.

Patrick Wilson, who plays Orm in this film, also turns up in Roland Emmerich's *Midway* (4K Blu-ray), which is a film with slightly more realistic sound design. When we're onboard the aircraft carrier, the R18s toils away quietly to give a low-level rumble, indicating the distant thrum of engines. It also picks out bass thuds in the Thomas Wander/Harald Kloser score, lending the impression of mounting doom as we get to the morning of June 4, 1942.

At times during the following, lengthy action scenes, the R18s's bass delivery leaves my jaw on the floor. This is not all about pure depth and power either, there's its ability to find the difference in low-end effects, and to add to the impact of the wider speaker array as a hole. One minute there's a lovely physicality to the sound of bomb explosions tearing through concrete, next up the R18s is helping to give the impression of heavy planes flying all air around you.

The bass gets bigger still when the film goes underwater with the *USS Nautilus*, at times sounding a touch overdone. Still, when the depth charges arrive, the long, deep notes are held impressively.

Back above water, as McCluskey dive bombs ('4000, 3000, 2000') the tension in the scene is almost unbearable, underwritten by the LFE. And once the bombing runs have finished, you feel as a battered as the Japanese navy.

Gigantic output

A real 'home cinema' subwoofer, Perlisten's R18s makes use of its 18in driver to put on a startling show of scale – this woofer plays as big as you might imagine. However, alongside its gigantic output it still shows off the benefits of the engineering and technology that elevate its price tag to £5,000. The R18s slams hard and moves fast, while sounding rich and clean too. Audition with confidence! ■

HCC VERDICT



Perlisten R18s

→ £5,000 → www.perlistenaudio.com

WE SAY: Perlisten's newest subwoofer finds the brand going bigger with an 18in driver, and the result is a beast of a bassmaker made for movie LFE.

1. The 18in driver carries on Perlisten's glass-fibre design

2. With control via the partnering app or top-panel touchscreen, the rear of the R18s is uncluttered