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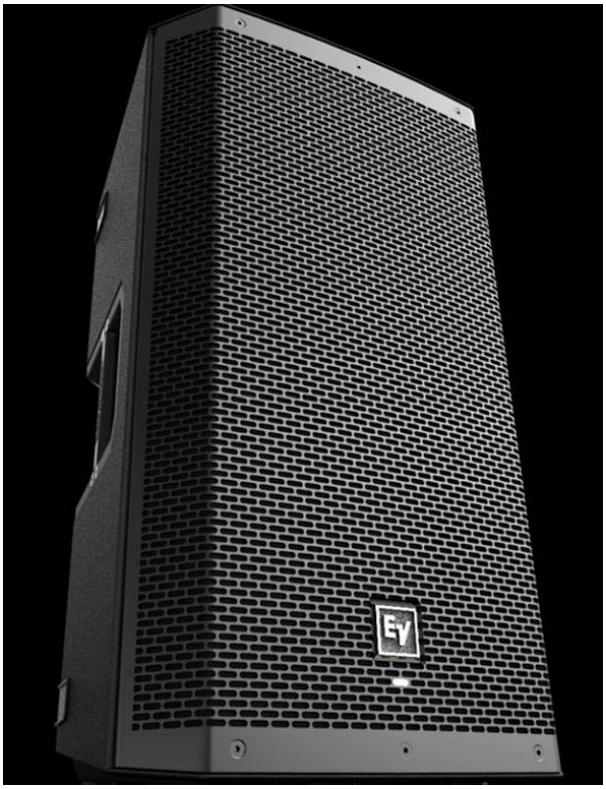
# PAR Live Review: Electro-Voice ZLX-12P Two-Way Powered Loudspeaker

by Strother Bullins, On December 23, 2013 10:15 EDT

*With a thousand watts via Class D amplification—the current standard for pro-grade full-range portable PA enclosures—EV hits the market with a impressively built and well featured 12-inch model in the new ZLX-12P.*

Over the past couple of years, I've had the pleasure to use and evaluate much of our market's new portable PA that falls in the full-range 1000 W/Class D category. In doing so, I've almost as a rule requested 12-inch models from participating manufacturers; I find they are the most flexible for gigging musicians and bands (as we generally don't know exactly what is needed until arriving at the venue). Mated with a powered sub, a pair of 1000 W/Class D mains can most often cover any gig.

So, thanks to these high-power/light weight products, the bar has been significantly raised on my personal benchmarks. I no longer worry so much about whether such speakers have enough power; I now search for models that provide the best overall fidelity, with unique, job-easing features and a build quality that most closely resembles touring-grade enclosures.



Having reviewed a previous 1000 W/Class D ZLX model from Electro-Voice, expectations were already high for the new ZLX-12P, an approximately 35 lb. powered two-way featuring a 12-inch woofer and 1.5-inch high-frequency titanium compression driver with a frequency response of 65 Hz to 18 kHz, delivering 126 dB maximum SPL. In application, I found this ZLX to be the best yet—with super-simple DSP built-in, accessible from a rear panel push/rotary knob and LCD display, while comprehensive I/O and build quality closely resemble strengths within EV's pro touring gear. Best of all, the ZLX-12P is available now at $399 street, each.

Features

The ZLX-12P's cabinet is built of one of the best balances of polypropylene, steel and rubber I've seen in portable PA. Angles are bolstered by the inclusion of smart rubber feet. Carrying handles are well placed and ideally shaped from an ergonomic perspective. Plus, the overall design is unique; there's really nothing in the design that says, "me, too."

I/O includes two Neutrik combo XLR/TRS inputs for mic/line input with adjacent rotary level adjustments; an XLR output, passing the ZLX-12P's two-channel mix to monitors or a subwoofer, etc.; and a unique Aux In eighth-inch TRS stereo input—its signal appears on Channel 1, summed to mono. As such, the ZLX-12P is a great multipurpose powered speaker, too.

The rotary knob next to the ZLX-12P's LCD screen acts as Master Volume and DSP control. Adjustable parameters include Mode with Live, Speech, and Club EQ presets; Location with Pole, Monitor and Bracket EQ presets; Treble (-10 dB to +10 dB); Bass (-10 dB to +10 dB); Sub (a HPF with 80 Hz, 100 Hz, and 120 Hz settings); among a few LCD screen contrast/brightness adjustments. I found both the Mode and Location settings to be very well chosen and employed all successfully (except Bracket, as I did not attempt an install application.

Finally, the obligatory pole-mount came with strip-resistant brass threads, another indication that EV truly understands gigging with portable PA; too often, I see corners cut here, eventually resulting in stripped threads for what may be the most important (and overlooked) physical feature of portable speakers: the quality of built-in mounting hardware.

In Use

I swapped the ZLX-12P pair into my normal gig rig for a couple of weekend club dates, handling main monitor duties while paired with a smallish 600 W powered subwoofer—a standard I've found works ideally with this particular venue and four-piece rock band. The PA handled a relatively low-input setup: vocals, guitars, kick and snare/hi-hat mic. First impressions came quick—in soundcheck for the first date, the guitarist—unprompted while standing out front—commented how "full" and "open" the ZLX-12P pair sounded. I agreed.

A week later, I employed a single ZLX-12P on a very simple singer/songwriter coffeehouse gig, where vocalists used only the EV's built-in mixer with a mic (the great feedback-resistant Electro-Voice PL80a supercardioid, my favorite affordable handheld dynamic) and a DI input. Placed horizontal and set to the Location: Monitor DSP preset, the ZLX-12P impressively served as both a monitor and a main with a full, small room filling sound. One performer sang to prerecorded material, thanks to the EV's Aux In feature (and the performer's iPhone). In this application, the ZLX-12P's feature set allowed it to be the only "live gear" on the stage—clean, impressive and efficient.

Summary

Electro-Voice further bolsters their reputation in the portable PA market with these extensions to the ZLX Series. Again, I must stress that the ZLX-12P is $399 street. For the money, it's hard to beat.

Price: $399 street

Contact: Electro-Voice | http://www.electro-voice.com

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