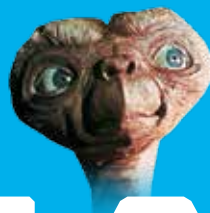


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Mark Craven admires the brains behind this brawny, bijou bassmaker

KEF sub thinks inside the box



KEF's new subwoofer is calling out for a slick nickname. From the brand that brought us the Blade and Muon speakers, plus The Reference range, comes the ...KC62. This moniker makes it sound like something that's fallen off a spreadsheet rather than what it is, which is arguably the coolest subwoofer I've ever had a chance to play around with. Maybe it will grow its own nickname over time, like KEF's 'Eggs'. It's certainly a cracker.

The KC62 was announced earlier this year with much fanfare by KEF, which clearly believed it was on to a winner. Here, went the blurb, was a subwoofer for everyone (well, those with a spare £1,400). Cute and compact, and packing patent-pending technologies around its dual driver implementation, the KC62, we're told, means that 'deep and powerful bass is no longer solely the domain of big-shouldered, massive subwoofers.'

Now, some of my best friends are massive subwoofers, but a compact sub has considerable appeal, mostly because it's easier to accommodate in your room, and far more likely to be allowed into a typical lounge. And, adds KEF, smaller models can be more practical for systems using multiple subs. There's also the fact that smaller environments don't actually need a woofer capable of hitting *Armageddon* SPL levels at 10m.

Iron Law Man

The white paper for the KC62 goes into detail about Hofmann's Iron Law. The concept of audio engineer Josef Anton Hofmann, this 'law' outlines three parameters of loudspeaker design – cabinet volume, low-frequency extension and efficiency – and says that one of these must be sacrificed in pursuit of optimum results in the other two. Related to subs, this means that a big box is needed to achieve a high output and deep bass. KEF thinks differently.

In the KC62, two 6.5in woofers are mounted in a force-cancelling (opposed) configuration. This isn't particularly unusual – the same method is used in KEF's considerably larger KF92 sub – but what's going on behind the scenes is.

In place of the standard twin magnet system, the KC62 uses just one, while the voice coils and suspensions of the two identical drivers themselves are not identical. One of the coils has a larger diameter, allowing the two to overlap

and 'travel within their own gap without colliding.' KEF has named this patent-pending technology UniCore – which proves it can still think of cool names when it wants to – and claims the result is a greater excursion and higher potential SPLs. Additional tweaks around suspension mass and magnetic flux are then deployed to ensure the KC62 doesn't have two drivers behaving differently.

Heavy metal thunder

This is all the theory. In practice, what you get is a subwoofer that's about the size of football, but with the weight of a small elephant – well, 14kg. Some of this surprising heft will come from the KC62's aluminium cabinet, which not only enables a sultry curved design, but works to manage heat dispersion from its 2 x 500W Class D amp stage. If you think that 1,000W seems like quite a lot to drive a pair of 6.5in woofers, you'd be right.

The styling of the KC62 is clearly informed by the brand's LS50 bookshelf speakers and, to a lesser extent, its Q Series models. It replaces the square subwoofer aesthetic of old with rounded sides and corners. A flat bottom stops it rolling around your carpet.

Measurements are approximately 25cm wide in all directions, but the curves make it seem even smaller than this. There are no grilles for its woofer duo, so beware of pets and toddlers.

Terminals and controls are mounted on a tidy rear panel, and include crossover, volume, phase, LFE and stereo line in/out. To save space, speaker-level inputs are via a Phoenix connector. There's also a power switch (obviously) – when on, the status light on the KC62 glows orange to indicate the sub is in standby. When it wakes, this light glows white for six seconds, and then fades off. The reason I've mentioned this is because I experienced occasions where the sub refused to wake from its standby mode



AV INFO

PRODUCT:
Compact dual 6.5in active subwoofer

POSITION:
KEF's smallest woofer, priced below the dual 9in KF92

PEERS:
B&W PVID; SVS SB-3000

- 1. Got white speakers? The KC62 has a finish to match
- 2. A KEF logo and standby/on status LED sit on the 'front'
- 3. KEF's 6.5in woofers are mounted on P-Flex 'Origami' surrounds



(presumably because the output level from my AVR was too low), and there appears to be no way to manually turn it 'on'. Raise the volume a bit and wait.

There's also a switch for five preset EQ options – Room, Wall, Corner, Cabinet and Apartment. The first four are self-explanatory, while the latter is designed to avoid upsetting the neighbours and 'reduces the level of very low frequencies.' You won't want to use that one.

Get down, get funky

I set up the KC62 with, at first, a pair of Q Acoustics 3010i bookshelf speakers in a 2.1 setup, and it immediately made them sound like two full-size loudspeakers. The scale of everything expanded. *Funk Blaster*, a frankly bonkers electronic funk/hip-hop track from KOAN Sound (Tidal Master), oozed from the system with chunky, chewy bass that sounded tonally even across the range, while kick drums pounded with a purposeful thump. It's a get-off-your-sofa-and-boogie performance that doesn't seem right coming from such a diddy box.

KEF claims an 11Hz low-frequency reach for the KC62 (which, incidentally, is the same claimed of its twin 9in – but non-UniCore – KF92 model). I'm sure it managed to provoke such frequencies in its lab, but in the real world, in your real living room, don't expect this woofer to blow out your windows.

What it does do very, very well, is range low enough to absolutely convey the huge thuds, bangs, rumbles and whirrs of your favourite movie soundmixes, with a superb feeling of tautness and control, while remaining invisible itself. You could by all means place the KC62 within eyesight, as it looks gorgeous, but there's no indication that it's in the room apart from the flapping of your trousers. Some bigger, ostensibly beefier subs have a habit of making their presence felt in more ways than one; you begin to hear the cabinet itself, or drivers lolling around after exertion. Yet this KEF, no doubt thanks to its onboard DSP and Smart Distortion Control Technology (which measures current information from the voice coils to pre-limit distortion), plus rock-solid cabinet and natty 'Origami' driver surrounds, is church-mouse quiet.

So it goes low, but does it go loud? Certainly to the level that I can imagine anyone wanting to run it. It's a compact sub intended for small to medium-sized environment. KEF's spec claim is of a maximum 105dB SPL. If you want more than that, you'll need to go bigger.

In my 4m x 5m living room, with *Iron Man* (Disney+) providing the evening's entertainment, the KC62 became the star of the show in a 5.1.2 Atmos setup. Before Tony Stark first appears in his D.I.Y. Tin Man costume, all the bad guys can see is a dark cave entrance – but they can hear ominous footfalls. Each is accompanied by a bassy whump that evokes the tension in the scene, and as they get louder

SPECIFICATIONS

DRIVERS: 2 x 6.5in woofers with P-Flex surround **ENCLOSURE:** Sealed, with force-cancelling driver configuration **ONBOARD POWER (CLAIMED):** 2 x 500W (RMS) Class D amps **FREQUENCY RESPONSE (CLAIMED):** 11Hz-290Hz **REMOTE CONTROL:** No **DIMENSIONS:** 246(h) x 256(w) x 248(d)mm **WEIGHT:** 14kg

FEATURES: Stereo/LFE line-level input; speaker-level input; line-level output; room/wall/corner/cabinet/apartment preset EQs; crossover and phase control; compatible with KEF KW1 wireless transmitter; UniCore overlapping voice coil/single magnet technology; Smart Distortion Control technology; aluminium cabinet

TESTED WITH



IRON MAN: The Marvel Cinematic Universe got off to a flyer in 2008 with this smart, action-packed origin story. After bashing its way through home cinemas on a high-quality Blu-ray, it appeared on a low-quality 4K BD in Germany in 2017, before Disney finally did it 4K justice in 2019, and uprated the soundmix to Dolby Atmos.

and louder, the KC62 happily obliges. It sounds pure and unruffled, big and weighty. The ensuing firefight and flame-thrower display then lays on elements higher up the bass range; rapid machine-gun fire, exploding munitions, the roar of his suit's thrusters. The bass is all thrillingly on point; lean and without any excess fat. You could almost call it superheroic.

The little engine that could

So: aside from grumbling about the sleepy nature of its standby mode, my time with the KEF KC62 was continually joyous. It has the lush looks and refined build quality I've come to expect from the brand,

and a performance that makes a mockery of its

dimensions. It's a riot with movies and assured with music, and undoubtedly very clever.

At the same time, it's not exactly affordable, and those with plenty of floor space and no aversion to bigger, boxier woofers may well prefer to look elsewhere.

There's no escaping the fact the KC62 has been designed to fit a brief. But it does so brilliantly ■

4. As well as standard connections and settings, the KC62 has a five-preset EQ switch



HCC VERDICT



KEF KC62

→ £1,400 → uk.kef.com

WE SAY: KEF's mini woofer looks as cool as a cucumber and sounds it too. Bass is deep and plenty loud enough, and always totally controlled. A thing of beauty, priced accordingly.