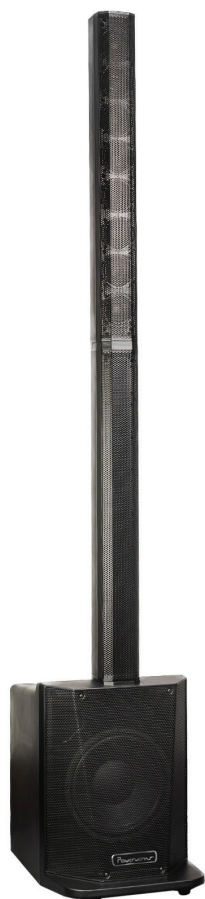


POWERWERKS SYSTEM ONE

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MSRP: £499

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Are you in the market for a portable column array PA system? There are a few on the market now; the last two years have seen an increase in releases from PA manufacturers and there are good reasons why. Portability is probably the main one, followed by the simplicity of setup and the ability to use them in a wide variety of situations, including for speech reinforcement or providing sound for singers, bands and DJs at gigs.

The Powerwerks SYSTEM ONE portable linear column array system is the latest entrant to the market. As both a DJ and a singer, I thought it would be great to get hands on and test one out for the reasons above. And for one other very compelling reason – price. Under £500 for a full PA featuring a Class D amplifier supplying over 1,050w of power through a 10" subwoofer and eight 3" high-frequency drivers. An innovative connection system allowing for easy setup and break down. What's not to love?

With a 10" subwoofer encased in a plastic-moulded case and a carry handle integrated on the top, the system is highly portable and weighs in at just 13.2kg (29lbs) and measures 350mm (w) x 470mm (h) x 460mm (d) (13.7in x 18.1in x 18.5in). The sub is where all the power and control come from, boasting a frequency response of 40-200Hz.

The mixer section is located on top and comprises a 3-channel mixer and Bluetooth. Channels 1 and 2 have combi jack connections (XLR and TRS) supporting treble, bass and reverb. You have the option to change input from mic to line level and each channel has its own volume control. A third channel is a combined channel – 3/4 with 1/4" jack sockets – and RCA inputs including a 3.5mm stereo jack and, again, its own volume control. The master output adjusts the main output while the sub volume can be increased when required, depending on the size of the room. There are four DSP EQ pre-sets (main, monitor, DJ, and speech) with a corresponding green LED indicating which DSP is selected. The other LEDs on the mixer section are signal, power and limit, placed in a traffic light formation to clearly show when the system is on the limit.

All the inputs are located on the rear of the unit, including the IEC connection for mains and a link out for connecting to other systems. The system is not supplied with a subwoofer cover, but you'll definitely want to buy one to protect it from damage.

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The speaker column array sections consist of two equally sized pieces, each measuring 85mm (w) x 765mm (h) x 90mm (d) (3.3in x 30.1in x 3.5in). One of the array sections is a blank and is obviously lighter than the second section, comprising eight 3" high-frequency neodymium compression drivers with a frequency response of 200Hz-16Khz. Handily they come with a nice padded bag.

It took me less than a minute to put it all together. The columns slot together via grooves from back to front and slide into the slotted contacts on the base of the sub – perfect for when time is limited. There's also an added bonus: the complete system height is 2m (78.7in) but if you have limited room you can remove the non-speaker line array section and just use the top array, reducing the height to just 1,195mm (47in).

The Bluetooth functionality is fantastic for getting music on in a hurry. Pairing the device to the speaker is simple using the pair button on the sub – simply wait for a fast-blue flash, which then turns to a solid blue when your Bluetooth-enabled device is connected. There is also a 'Link' button that enables the pairing of a second one-speaker system, allowing for even more sound in a quick and easy way.

So, what's the system like when it's in use? As expected, when using in Bluetooth mode the sound is a little restricted, as all the settings for this channel are controlled from your device.

I had a go using my phone and could improve the sound quality with some adjustments, but you'll need to spend some time figuring out your own device to get the best output. In any case, if you are using the system at party volume levels, it will always be best to use the main channels, which improves the sound considerably. When I connected to the channel inputs the increased EQ adjustments made a massive difference, with heavy, punchy bass and crisp, bright top-end sound.

Connecting a microphone to one of the channels resulted in a clear crisp sound using the speech DSP setting, but when singing (as fully tested by my eight-year-old son) the sound was improved by reverting to the main DSP with added reverb. The DSP settings in main mode are ideal for any scenario, as the others are suited to very specific needs. I found that the DJ DSP setting was weaker than the main DSP setting when playing the same song on each setting – but perhaps I just like my sound different to Powerwerks' sound technicians! The monitor and speech options took most of the bass frequencies out; a quick and handy way to set the most appropriate EQ settings for these uses.

At this price point, the Powerwerks SYSTEM ONE is a great buy that's ideal for anyone who needs an array system that's light, portable and compact. A single SYSTEM ONE alone is extremely versatile, but buying two will give any DJ or entertainer a great PA system for a wider range of gigs, with plenty of room to spare.

