

Yamaha YSP-900 speaker system

Can one speaker match a complete home cinema system?

by Paul Lester published on 26 January 2007

Yamaha's YSP is part of a series of digital sound projectors designed to offer an all-in-one surround sound solution.

Various models in the range are optimised for use with specific sized televisions, the YSP-900 on test is ideal for 32-inch screens, but in reality you'll still benefit from the unit's capabilities even if you're not using the most favourable size.

The YSP is a slimline shielded speaker unit housing two woofers and 21 full range speakers, and is designed to sit just above or below your television projecting audio out into the room.

Yamaha suggest the benefits of the system are avoiding frustrating assembly of wired surround systems and the resultant litter of speakers.

It's true that the unit is easy enough to set up, but in terms of avoiding complicated configuration the claim is somewhat ambitious. The YSP includes a range of inputs and outputs, including standard composite, optical and DVD coaxial. There's also an option to add a separate sub-woofer, something we'll focus on a bit later.

Getting the YSP wired up to your home setup is pretty straightforward, but it's the sheer range of options for adjusting the audio projection that can prove a little baffling.

To make things a bit easier you're supplied with a wired microphone that you can place in the optimum listening position and use alongside an auto-setup process to optimise sound for that particular spot in the room.

This is a nice idea, and one you'll find from plenty of other manufacturers including Denon, and actually works very well for getting an initial configuration up and running.

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Unfortunately, down to the way the YSP technology works, you'll ideally have your TV set up in a rather specific position in the room.

Yamaha want you to place the speaker in the middle of a room roughly equal distance between the walls, so that part of the audio image can be bounced around before reaching the listener to create the surround effect.

Those with TVs situated in the middle of a wall in box rooms are in a great spot, but most others who have a TV in a corner, or whose room is rather oddly shaped will find it more difficult to get the best results.

Regardless, firing up the YSP certainly has a dynamic effect, particularly if you feed it Dolby or DTS multi channel audio.

There are a wide range of listening modes so you can configure either a wide spread for family listening or have it more targeted directly in front of the screen. You'll find yourself playing around for hours here, adjusting manual settings and trying a range of preset modes to find the best environment.

You're given some help in that presets are configured for movies, music, gaming or cinema sound, and will also find that standard stereo signals can be artificially split to create surround sound effect.

The sheer number of possible configurations can appear daunting at first, but you can save settings to memory once you've found the results you're after. We did notice that thumping bass was somewhat lacking, and you might want to invest in a separate sub-woofer for more impact from lower frequencies.

As mentioned you can wire one of these straight in, Yamaha now actually provide a specific sub for this system so if you really want the full effect this may be a worthy investment to accompany

At a glance

What is it?

A digital sound projector housing 23 separate speakers

Good

Neat, stylish and compact, helpful initial setup utility, plenty of configuration options

Bad

Sheer range of ways you can configure sound is a little daunting, bass response not as good as we'd hoped, quite expensive

Verdict

The YSP is a bit of a luxury but it certainly looks good and the overall effect is impressive. It doesn't really deliver fully in comparison to a dedicated surround sound setup though

Price £599

Our score

7/10

Your score

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the YSP. It's also worth noting that you will miss the dedicated rear speakers from a conventional setup, despite the YSP's ability to bounce sound around the room you don't get the same effect for rear audio.

VERDICT

You're paying quite a lot for the YSP-900, and to get the full benefit from the system you'll need to make sure it's set up in the best way possible.

There's also quite a lot of configuration and tweaking to do if you want the best results, so despite what press releases may have you believe this isn't really for the A/V beginner.

We were impressed by the results in our tests though, and if you're in the market for a neat, compact pseudo-surround system, and can afford it, you'll find the YSP-900 to be an effective and stylish solution. Alternatively if you are looking for the simple entry level option have a look at Philip's new AmbiSound set due for release later in the year.