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Denon Smart S-302 home cinema system - First Look

Can Denon's home ent system really offer all that it says it does?

by Stuart Miles published on 18 September 2007

Denon has launched a new flagship model as part of its Smart Home Cinema systems series, but does it impress? We were given a sneak peak at the new DVD player come Amplifier at an exclusive event in central London.

Compact and well-built, the Denon Smart S-302 has probably all that you could want from a connected home cinema device.

Costing £1250 when it goes on sale later this year, there is a DVD/CD player, Wi-Fi connectivity for network streaming from your PC, the ability to connect your iPod or other MP3 player, HDMI 1080p upscaling for improved DVD playback, and a 2.1 speaker system.

Promising an "enhanced audio performance", Denon say the S-302 features new technology Audyssey Bass-XT and Dynamic EQ for greater bass response without having to rely on a subwoofer the size of a house.

That amp is considerably smaller than we would thought it would be, and an additionally nice feature is that all the cables come out of the bottom rather than the back meaning you can ram the unit into the corner rather than worry about cables stopping you doing so.

The S-302 boasts an amplifier section with 50 -watts per channel, a 100-watt amplifier for the subwoofer and two flat profile three driver, two -way speakers which can be stand or wall mounted.

However in our brief listen, we watched the bridge sequence in Mission Impossible 3, we were disappointed by the overall sound for the money. With only 2.1 speakers it has to work hard to



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create a virtual surround sound experience and we didn't think that it was, as one journalist who was with us at the time said, "that surroundy".

However as a caveat to that, we were in a large room, which might have affected the unit's overall performance.

The S-302 will also allow users to connect USB drives to the device as well as stream music from a PC or MP3 player.

As for the iPod interface, streaming internet radio stations or playing music from a USB disk, the Denon Interface is simple but effective capable of pulling the track details from the iPod and displaying them in its own way rather than Apple.

There isn't anything overly flash about them, but the overall menu interface for this element and general settings seemed to be finally something a lot more user friendly than what we have seen in the past from Denon.

The DVD drive is the same one that is found in the company's £150 DVD-2930 player and again in our brief play it seemed to perform well upscaling amply the DVDs we watched on the HD television we viewed it on.

VERDICT

The Smart S-302 seems to have all that you could want for a middle range home cinema system offering without getting into the full blown speaker systems and all the cabling that goes with it.

The fact that according to Denon you'll need to just plug in four cables and away you go will appeal to plenty of consumers, but with a doubt about the sound performance and the expensive price tag, this is one that is will require a closer look. The verdict is still out.

The Denon Smart S-302 is due out later in the year.

At a glance

What is it?

Home Cinema system

Good

Easy to install, small, well built, network streaming, HDMI, upscaling, iPod interface, Wi-Fi

Bad

Sound doesn't sound that "surroundy"

Verdict

With doubts about the sound performance and the expensive price tag, this is one that is will require a closer look. The verdict is still out

Price £1250

Your score

?/10