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Philips HTS8100 speakers

Is this the answer for your speakers

by Paul Lester published on 3 December 2007

In an attempt to combine the appeal of a home cinema surround system and upscaling DVD player with sound projection technology Philips has produced the stylish HTS8100.

From the rather dramatically shot press images of this product you'd be forgiven for thinking it to be just another multi-channel bar speaker, when in fact it's a whole lot more. Supplied in the box is the main unit itself, which comprises of two 1-inch soft dome speakers and six full range woofers. There's also a massive 6.5-inch long throw woofer, which is mounted separately on the floor.

As is typical of Philips, the design and build of both the main sub and bar speaker is very solid and very stylish, whether you choose to mount it to the wall with the supplied fitting or simply rest it under a television.

Once up and running you can work through a setup procedure that helps compensate for one of the biggest issues with this design, namely the reduction in performance in an irregularly shaped room. Philips has countered this by allowing you to adjust the sound to compensate for the television's position, distance from the listener and even the material the walls are made out of.

Once this short wizard is completed you're ready to go, using either HDMI, Component or Scart connections to hook the device up to the rest of your setup. Alternatively there's a line-in for an audio player, USB port for playing back encoded media content stored on a flash drive, and a port for hooking up the Philips' iPod dock. You'll also find an FM radio built-in.

The range of audio based features of the 8100 is only part of its arsenal, as you'll notice from an "open/close" button on the remote that slides the front panel to the right to reveal a DVD player that upscales to 1080p. It'll also play back encoded



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media such as MP3, DivX and MPEG video burnt to rewritable disc.

With all of these features it's important that the performance doesn't let things down, thankfully we were quite impressed. Mid and high tones are extremely crisp and clear, working dramatically alongside the sub to create a very well balanced environment at the front of the room.

Although the all-round impact of this speaker combination is very impressive, we didn't notice much impact from the "rear" speakers, that is audio supposedly being bounced down the sides of the room. This was a little disappointing but didn't detract too much from the experience.

In terms of visual quality the upscaling player performs fairly well, although not quite on par with Toshiba's excellent HD DVD player range, with colours sometimes appearing a little washed out.

VERDICT

Overall we were very impressed by the stylish design, build quality and performance of the HTS8100.

Unfortunately you're paying a hefty price for the experience, £699 isn't exactly a snip when it comes to home cinema systems, especially when you consider that this one starts to look out of place at screen sizes above 42-inch.

We can see this appealing more to the elitist market, especially from an aesthetics point of view.

At a glance

What is it?

A home cinema sound projection combo

Good

Upscaling 1080p DVD player, stylish and wellbuilt, impressive front room performance

Bad

Very expensive, limited rear speaker impact, only really suitable for mid-sized screens

Verdict

The HTS8100 is an appealing enough solution but you'll struggle to justify the expense against more dedicated setups that offer similar features

Price £699

Our score

7/10

Your score

?/10