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Philips HTS6515 home cinema system

Want svelte lines and phat sounds?

by Chris Hall published on 26 September 2008

The HTS6515 offers a 2.1 speaker system hooked up to a central DVD player and controller. With the emphasis on interesting design, it offers a wall mountable solution moving away from traditional boxy under-the-TV systems. But can it deliver? We find out.

The focal point of the HTS6515 is the central controller unit, which rather than being your normal front-loading black slab, is a slimline top-loading DVD player. The top-loading description probably does it a disservice, as press the eject button and the disc cover neatly rises and swivels away to reveal the bay for the disc, invoking memories of high-end CD players. With black gloss front and the signature flare around the edge, the HTS6515 is very much the exhibitionist, made to be noticed.

To this end a neat stand slides on to the back to raise the unit to an angle where it can't be missed should you opt for a table top position. Alternatively a supplied bracket will enable wall mounting. The left and right speakers and similarly can be mounted on the wall and brackets are supplied for this purpose.

The other components of the system include the large subwoofer (295 x 295 x 443mm, 1 x 6.5in long throw woofer) and the two front "horizontal" speakers (336 x 115 x 130mm, 3 x 2.5in full range woofers). With such a strong emphasis on design, some might be disappointed to find that it is a completely wired system. With the centre unit being slimline, the speaker connections are through the subwoofer where the horizontal speakers connect. A single cable connects up to the centre unit, also providing power.

However, you'll then need to connect the controller unit to the TV and bring back the audio from the TV. Surprisingly there is no optical connection to facilitate this, instead opting for a



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3.5mm jack, connecting to the stereo audio out on your TV. The cable is supplied, so this is not really an issue. You'll also find an HDMI to support the upscaling DVD player, or Component video or Scart for those with older TVs. All these connections lie under a flap on the underside of the centre unit, again reinforcing the design, keeping things clean.

However, if you wish to add more audio inputs, the subwoofer also features a digital coaxial connection, FM antenna jack as well as AUX 2 & 3 stereo inputs, perhaps for your Sky box or PVR, although this very much depends on how you want to connect up your system - we'd prefer the single return from the TV into AUX 1 to save additional cabling and subsequent channel switching.

The central unit is well lit, with a neat glow around the disc bay and subtly lit control buttons. An LCD display gives you all the information you need, displaying the input currently selected and other such information. You'll need this information, because you have further options open to you. Lying on the right-hand side you'll find a 3.5mm input jack as well as USB 2.0 allowing connection of your MP3 player or thumb drive, supporting MP3 and WMA audio formats, and MPEG1/2 and DivX video, as well as JPEG images.

But extras aside, how does the DVD player perform? With selectable upscaling to 1080p, the DVD player competes with many other upscalers and certainly there were no complaints from us in terms of image quality. We did find, however, that there was some noise from the player, particularly noticeable as things get started, but not a distraction once the film's audio is running.

The sound however, is very pleasing indeed. The HTS6515 seems extremely capable in a range of conditions, from movies to music to regular television. With a range of sound options as well as adjustable treble and bass settings, we quickly found comfortable settings for our room. Whilst

At a glance

What is it?

2.1 speaker system with upscaling DVD player

Good

Brackets and cables supplied, design is stunning, plenty of connection options, sounds great

Bad

Disc player can be noisy, no HDMI cable, surround sound claims a little overstated

Verdict

The claims of 5.1 performance might be a little overstated, but there is no doubting that the system sounds pretty good and has a stunning design

Price £399.99

Our score

8/10

Your score

?/10

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the bass can be hugely powerful, it is happy to provide balanced support, bringing richness to everyday viewing and adding guts to your films.

Sitting behind this experience is a whole host of celebrated technology, namely Philips' Ambisound and FullSound and the system supports Dolby Digital, Dolby Prologic II and DTS. Ambisound effectively is designed to give you a virtual surround option and once engaged, does make a noticeable difference. In fact, once you've had it on, it's difficult to switch it off: we felt it provided a cleaner more refined sound overall.

Philips describe Ambisound with a collection of eyebrow-raising adjectives which we'll spare you. Suffice to say, it sounds great, and comes with a neat set-up for the type of room you are in. Whilst it provides good quality audio, it doesn't do the job of a full 5.1 set-up. However, for those that want to improve on fitted TV speakers, with a range of other music options, it certainly pleases.

Control is relatively simple with the HDMI CEC providing a range of controls linking compatible TVs. This can lead to some irritating moments should you want to play music with the TV switched off, but the one button power off is welcome when leaving the room. The menus themselves leave a lot to be desired, however, and Philips have fallen into the trap of boasting about 1080p upscaling and advanced acoustic technology whilst providing a blocky and dated menu structure.

Whilst you might think that you'll use the menu once and never again, you'll still have to live with the DVD loading screen and more significantly the control menus for your attached MP3 player. When you've wall mounted the thing, hooked it up to your slick TV and attached your new iPod nano, you don't want the display to let things down.

VERDICT

Overall, however, we were mighty impressed with

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the performance of the HTS6515. The cabling does mean that it can appear as though you are trailing a lot of wire around, but with some thought it works very well. Slightly unconventional connections surprise, but with those cables supplied it doesn't pose a problem. Credit also to Philips for supplying both the wall-mounting brackets and the FM antenna for a complete solution out of the box: it's just a shame they didn't stretch to the HDMI cable.

The claims of 5.1 performance might be a little overstated, but there is no doubting that the system sounds pretty good and has a stunning design. With plenty of connection options, the HTS6515 is sure to please those looking to add some clout to their movie watching, whilst avoiding the fuss and clutter of a 5.1 set-up.