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Optoma Game Time GT-7000 projector

Big screen gaming on the move?

by Chris Hall published on 18 November 2008

Projectors used to be the domain of the home cinema enthusiast or super wealthy in their loft apartments. But recent times have seen projectors become increasingly affordable, so can Optoma appeal to gamers with their Game Time system?

To call it a projector is something of an inaccuracy because in the box you get more than just a projector - you also get a 2.1 speaker unit and convenient rucksack for carrying the whole lot around with you. You also get HDMI, VGA, Component and S-Video cables. With all this in the box, it is clear that this is aimed at those who want a compact and potable solution, the idea being that you take it around to your mate's house for big screen gaming, sports or whatever.

So starting with the DLP projector itself, you get the black GT-7000 model (the GT-3000 is also a cheaper option from the Game Time line). The projector comes with that HD ready tag, so will give you a resolution of 1280 x 720, or 720p. This model claims a contrast ratio of 4000:1 and a brightness of 1600 lumens.

In terms of connections you get S-Video, VGA (Scart with the included adaptor), Component, analogue Video, and HDMI. There is no provision for audio, which we'll come back to later when we look at the speakers. There are basic controls on the top of the unit, although you are more likely to use the remote, which has blue backlit buttons and does the job, but is nothing too exciting.

You get a zoom dial as well as the focus ring for manual adjustment. Although there are no adjustable feet, you do get a front foot that can pop out to raise the unit slightly. Vertical keystone correction means setting up a projection from an incline is no problem. You get a throw distance of 1.2m to 12m, giving you a screen size of 1m to 7.36m in a 16:9 aspect ratio (a throw ratio of 1.55



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Out of the box and hooked up to our Xbox 360 using the Component connections we were playing in minutes. Playing Battlefield Bad Company the images were good during the day and even better once the sun went down and Burnout Paradise really lends itself to a bigger screen.

Overall the picture quality was very good - obviously the size and price of the unit should be taken into consideration - but there was some banding in colours that our LCD TV displays as a smooth gradation, for example in the background of the Xbox menus. Colours generally are very good though and it coped with the light conditions we tested it in. Images are a little on the soft side, lacking that Full HD support, but this wouldn't deter us: after all, this is aimed at a gaming audience, not the home cinema perfectionist.

Of course the Xbox 360 using the Component Video and Audio options is the easiest to set-up, because you can hook in the speakers using an RCA adapter cable which feeds into a 3.5mm jack on the rear of the speaker unit. If you are connecting to older machines then using a standard AV cable or Scart is again very straightforward. Those with an AV receiver will only have to hook up the HDMI (or Component Video) and keep their existing audio solution.

When you want to hook up your PS3 (or 360 Elite), things are not so simple, because you have to take the audio stream through a different cable, as there is no splitter to get the audio out from the HDMI source. So things get a little more fiddly, as you then have to dive into the menu to change your settings to put the audio out through the normal channel and not HDMI. As a portable solution, you'll have to make sure that wherever you are going has access to these cables unless you source the relevant cables yourself to complete the package.

At a glance

What is it?

Portable gaming projector

Good

Compact, good projector performance, complete package

Bad

Set-up can be fiddly, no provision for audio out, could buy separate pieces cheaper

Verdict

As a package we like it, but the essential components could be bought for less individually

Price £499

Our score

7/10

Your score

?/10

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The speakers themselves are better than they appear. The basic 2.1 system is compact, with a drop down subwoofer that forms a stand. They do look fairly cheap and don't reflect the good quality appearance of the projector. In practice it works fairly well as a compact travel solution, and works pretty well with games, but soon falls over when you start to put any pressure on it, either through movies or music. Played at louder volumes there is a great deal of distortion, but for group gaming on something like SingStar then it will be fine and we found for general gaming use it was adequate.

The sound connection is via that RCA adapter cable, although you also get a cable for any 3.5mm output, for example your PC. However, the remote only handles the projector, so you don't get speaker volume control, which are handled by some cheap-feeling buttons on the front of the unit.

Fan noise comes in at 29dB which we found combined with the Xbox fan noise was fairly prominent, although once you have your audio coming in, you won't really notice it.

But the projector does give you some handy presets, easy to click through to pick one that suits you if you don't want to dive into any of the other settings. You can also easily select the input you want, so if you have set up a number of video inputs you can instantly choose which you want.

VERDICT

Despite some connection issues and the need to track down previously obsolete cables, we couldn't help but like the Game Time GT-7000 offering. Being able to hook-up for big screen action was fantastic and would lend itself well to house and stag parties or any sort of public performance. Equally, business users might find this a convenient solution at a respectable price for making presentations on the move, especially if you want to include better sound than your laptop speakers.

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For the price you do get a complete package, including a well made rucksack to transport it all and as a compact solution we like it. Cut down to basics however, and you could buy the Optoma HD700X for less and speaker systems are commonly available.