



# Yamaha YSP-1600

It's the return of the soundbar this month, although seeing as it comes from Yamaha's YSP stable, let's say it's the return of the digital sound projector. You might remember me raving about the YSP-2500 a little over a year ago. A 7.1 bar and subwoofer home run, especially in the surround department. Well, a year has come and gone, and that's quite a while in tech years, so I was expecting a few surprises.

Surprise number one was something I was neither expecting nor have seen for quite some time here at *AV Magazine*: a standalone soundbar. No separate sub. I checked twice. Instead, the YSP-1600 has two built-in subwoofers, one at each end, each with their own bass reflex port. I would have cringed slightly at this, but after seeing how wide the bar was, I realized you could actually get a decent-

sized woofer in there: 85 mm to be exact. Not bad at all.

Having tested an array of soundbars from various companies, I know what I'm looking for from a design perspective. Firstly, given that soundbars always end up on my television stand in front of my actual television, I don't want something that's going to block part of my screen or the IR sensor. Secondly, I don't want something flashy that's going to draw my attention to it every few seconds.

Thankfully, the YSP-1600 checks both of those boxes. It's a brilliant height and it's black, which fits into my home theatre setup perfectly, looking for the most part like an extension of my television. The subtle badging and black brushed aluminium casing doesn't glare or detract from the illusion that music, TV and film are supposed to cast on the listener or the

viewer. So I suppose I could say I appreciate Yamaha's subtlety on this.

At its core, this standalone unit is an 8.2 channel array of cleverness. The eight high-quality speakers in the middle adjust themselves to 'beam' the sound according to the listener's position for maximum surround effect. Sound is bounced and delayed using Yamaha's DSP to create an actual surround sound experience, which must be heard to be believed. Yamaha really has done another great job here. It's not quite the same as being surrounded by five actual speakers but, just like the YSP-2500, it's as close as dammit.

The built-in subwoofers add a surprising amount of weight to an overall sound that I was expecting to be thin. It's not! My initial apprehension about the absence of a separate subwoofer was quickly put to rest by the immediate eagerness and





balance of the system.

There is an exciting level of attack and detail from both forefront and ambient sounds in film and television shows, as well as a nice warm, spacious general presence from the overall delivery. There is a good amount of control throughout the sound frequency spectrum without too much hardening in the upper echelons of the volume range, but those of you who are used to a dedicated subwoofer might miss a bit of low-end boom and consider the sound slightly bright. However, for what it is, the YSP-1600 is undeniably impressive.

There is an impressive list of features and connectivity options included in this neat little package. Most notably for me is the 'MusicCast' function. This App-based utility allows you to broadcast whatever music content you have on your wireless device to any MusicCast-capable device you have in your home. You can have

music playing on one, some or all devices simultaneously. Another notable 'nice to have' is the Bluetooth's ability to both receive and transmit signal, making this not only a Bluetooth speaker but also a Bluetooth streamer to other audio devices.

The functionality is both broad and easy to use. The included remote is blessedly compact and simple to navigate whether you're just pushing the buttons for their face value or using the on-screen GUI through the HDMI connection. It's coherent, succinct and never left me wanting for anything. It all just feels right as a payload.

It's been a good return for the soundbar this month. I was surprised accordingly and impressed where I feel I needed to be. If you were looking for an ultimately neat,

capable and surprisingly exciting solution for your home theatre needs, the YSP-1600 would be well worth your consideration... especially if there is another MusicCast capable device in your life.

Justin Beachcroft-Shaw

## VITAL STATS

**Amplifier** ..... Max rated output power:  
 Array speakers: 8x 2 watts  
 Subwoofers: 2x 30 watts  
**Drive units** ..... 8x 28 mm (array),  
 2x 85 mm (subwoofers)  
**Inputs** ..... 1x HDMI, 1x optical digital,  
 1x stereo analogue  
**Outputs** ..... 1x HDMI (ARC),  
 1x subwoofer out  
**Dimensions (WxHxD)**  
 ..... 100 x 65 x 130 mm  
**Weight** ..... 4.7 kg

### Verdict

A courageously complete and compact Digital Sound Projector from the people who get surround right.

**Price** ..... R12 990

**Supplied by** ..... Balanced Audio  
 011-259-7800

**e-Mail** ..... chantel@baudio.co.za

**Website** ..... www.yamaha.co.za

**OUR RATING: 84/100**

