

SHORT-THROW GAMING PROJECTOR

OPTOMA GT1080

COMPUTER
SHOPPER
RECOMMENDED



£650 inc VAT • From www.scan.co.uk

VERDICT

It lacks video inputs beyond HDMI, but this short-throw gaming projector is a versatile big-screen TV substitute

SHORT-THROW PROJECTORS ARE a great way of bringing big screen gaming to a small room at a lower price than a large TV. Optoma's GT1080 does exactly this and is able to create a 100in display from a metre away, so even the smallest gaming den should have room for it.

At just 2.65kg, the GT1080 is both small and light enough to be moved around, and also comes with a carrying case for extra portability. It's adaptable, too, as it supports both inverted and mirrored projection should you wish to use a ceiling mount or place it behind your projection screen to save space. Each of its feet are adjustable, and there's vertical keystoneing to ensure you get a proper rectangular image on to your projection surface regardless of the height the projector.

The only video inputs on the GT1080 are a pair of HDMI ports, one of which is compatible with MHL, which means you can project your tablet or smartphone's screen on to a bigger surface. We'd prefer a slightly larger selection of video inputs, though, including a VGA input.

THE BRIGHT STUFF

Image quality is excellent for the price. The 2,800 lumen bulb is bright enough to overcome some artificial light, but you should dim your lights and close the curtains where possible, as darker spots onscreen suffer greatly when external light sources are present. The DLP chip, which projects through a high-speed colour wheel, creates crisp and colourful images. However, during your first few days with the projector, you should test out colour and image options to see which suit you best.

The Gaming preset works well for games, making hard-to-spot objects in darkened areas easier to see. When we switched to another

source to view some high-resolution photos, though, we found the Gaming preset artificial-looking. The more realistic Reference preset was better for our high-resolution photos. Thankfully, your choice of preset for each HDMI input is remembered, so if you use the Gaming mode for your games console on one input and Reference for your laptop on the other, the projector will choose the preset you last used for each device.

There are also three slots for user-created presets and an array of colour options, including BrilliantColor and Dynamic Black. Both work in moderation, but when BrilliantColor is turned up too high it creates a messy, artificial-looking image. Dynamic Black alters contrast levels based on what's onscreen, but the change can jar when it happens in the middle of a scene.

The GT1080 is a brilliant projector, perfect for gamers who want a bigger screen but don't have money for a large TV

More conventional image adjustments include individual hue, saturation and gain settings for red, green, blue, cyan, yellow, magenta and white, all easily manageable via the well-designed remote control. The remote control is backlit, too, which is a nice touch.

MOTION SENSE

The GT1080 handles rapid movement well. It doesn't support frame interpolation, which we've seen on more expensive projectors, but although juddering was present on moving objects, it didn't distract from the action or ruin our gaming. We'd have liked more digital image processing tools such as noise reduction, but they are rarely found on a projector at this price.

Although 3D is also supported, this comes at an extra cost in the form of a transmitter and one pair of active shutter glasses priced at £90. Extra glasses cost £80 each, which is steep, particularly as the 3D isn't brilliant. We found that 3D films and games such as *Avatar* and *Killzone 3* sacrificed a lot of their vibrancy and lush visuals because of the 3D effect. This is more an effect of the glasses than the projector. Still, it's nice to have the option to upgrade.



We were impressed with the 10W speakers built into the GT1080; in many projectors, the speakers feel like they've been added as an after-thought, but those of the GT1080 are loud and very clear. They can't match a good set of 2.1 or 5.1 speakers, but they're more than adequate for normal usage if you're not too bothered about the sound of your games.

The only audio output present is a 3.5mm jack, which will be handy for headphone users and for basic multimedia speakers. If you want to use high-end audio devices, you'll need to connect them directly to your video source rather than the projector, which may prove problematic if you have multiple sources such

as a games console and a PC or set-top box. In this case, you'll need to invest in an amplifier.

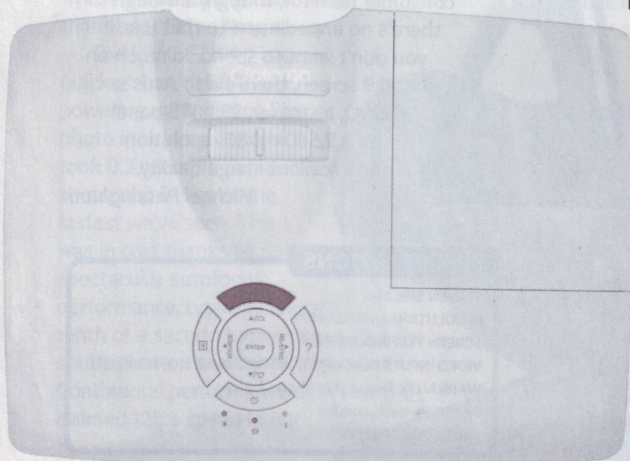
PROJECTION RACKET

Optoma's GT1080 is a brilliant projector that's perfect for gamers who want a bigger screen but don't have the money for a large TV. Its short-throw capabilities mean it should fit into any room, and its adjustable feet, keystone settings and colour settings mean it's versatile and easy to set up. The lack of video input beyond HDMI and slightly lacking 3D performance are only minor drawbacks. However, if you have more to spend and don't need short-throw capabilities, Optoma's HD25-LV (see Reviews, Shopper 319) is also worth considering, as it's a strong performer with a brighter lamp and a better range of inputs.

Michael Passingham

SPECIFICATIONS

PROJECTOR TYPE Single-chip DLP
NATIVE RESOLUTION 1,920x1,080
VIDEO INPUTS 2xHDMI (1xMHL)
LAMP LIFE 5,000h
LAMP BRIGHTNESS 2,800 lumen
SIZE 114x315x224mm
WEIGHT 2.65kg
WARRANTY Two-year RTB
DETAILS www.optoma.co.uk
PART CODE GT1080



HOME-CINEMA PROJECTOR

OPTOMA HD50



£1,000 inc VAT • From www.richersounds.com

VERDICT

With its large lens and tiny chassis, the HD50 is a highly flexible projector that's far more portable than the competition

ONE OF THE advantages of choosing a projector with a large lens is that its throw ratio is often much higher than projectors with smaller lenses. You can position it further away from your projection surface while still producing a large image. Big lenses are often found in very expensive projectors that have large cases. What makes Optoma's HD50 so remarkable is that its huge lens is packed in a chassis measuring just 286x265x124mm, which is half the width of a typical high-end projector such as Epson's EH-TW6100. Despite its tiny dimensions, the projector still has a huge throw ratio of 1.39-2.09:1. This isn't far off that of the EH-TW6100, which is considerably larger and more expensive.

This makes the HD50 ideal for those who need a small projector. Its large throw ratio also makes it more adaptable to different room sizes, which is handy if you'll be using it in various rooms.

OVER THE RAINBOW

One reason why the HD50 is much cheaper than other large-lens projectors is its use of DLP technology. DLP uses a colour wheel to project images, which means you'll see a few rainbow effects crop up while watching films. Whether this bothers you will depend on how susceptible you are to the effect; we found it was noticeable during testing. It didn't make for uncomfortable viewing, though, and was more obvious when browsing through the projector's menu system. Still, we think the effect was more pronounced on the HD50 than Optoma's cheaper HD25-LV projector.

The HD50's bright 2,200 ANSI lumen lamp ensures it has plenty of brightness for all lighting conditions. Colours looked rich

regardless of whether we had the lights on or off, and we were impressed with how much detail we saw in darker night scenes with the lights on. The HD50 has a 15 per cent vertical lens shift, so it's easier to adjust the height of an image if the projector is placed on a low table, for example.

You'll find a handful of menu buttons on top of the projector, but the comprehensive backlit remote control is much easier to use. Our review sample was a-bit too responsive, though. Pressing the navigational buttons tended to jump two options instead of one, so we had to make sure we pressed the buttons lightly to select the right setting.

The HD50 has two HDMI inputs and a VGA input, along with composite and component inputs, a 3D-Sync port for Optoma's optional ZF2100 3D emitter system, a 12V trigger and an RS232 port for integrating the projector into a home automation system. There's also a USB service port and USB power port.

SETTING THE SCENE

The HD50 has a variety of picture modes, including Reference, Cinema, Vivid, Bright, Game, User and 3D, but nearly all looked the same. Reference was a fraction darker than the others, but only Bright produced any discernible difference, mainly due to its brighter colours and higher levels of contrast. All can be customised to your liking, though. Basic picture settings include brightness, contrast, colour, tint and sharpness.

There are plenty of advanced picture settings, too, including noise reduction, gamma, Brilliant Colour, Optoma's Pure Engine feature, dynamic black and several colour options. These include colour

temperature, gamut coverage, individual colour values, RGB gain, RGB channel and colour space. All let you calibrate the HD50 right down to the finest detail.

Optoma's Pure Engine feature provides three additional settings to improve picture quality. The first is Ultra Detail, which supposedly helps images look sharper. We couldn't see any difference when watching our Blu-ray discs, but DVDs showed some improvement, particularly when we opted for the User setting in the Ultra Detail menu. Text and fine detail did look sharper up close, but we're not sure it makes enough of a difference to improve the projector's upscaling dramatically.

The second setting is PureColour, which makes colours appear richer and more vibrant. This had a more dramatic effect on colour reproduction, but made films look oversaturated if we increased it any higher than mid-way.

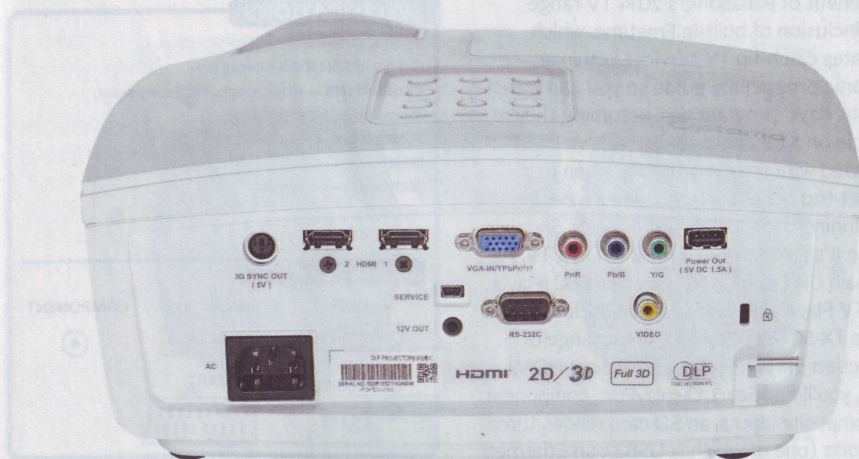
MOTION'S EDGE

PureMotion is Optoma's frame interpolation feature. We appreciated this feature the most, as leaving it turned off meant films could appear quite jerky during heated action sequences. Quick camera pans in *Star Trek* stuttered across the screen when we left PureMotion off. Setting it to Low helped smooth this over without making everything else appear too unnatural. Any higher, and the frames started to tear across the screen.

The HD50 can project films in 3D, but the projector doesn't come with 3D glasses; you must buy the glasses and 3D emitter system separately (Optoma ZF2100, £80 from www.projectorplanet.co.uk).

Optoma's HD50 is a great projector for use in a variety of rooms. It's a shame that it doesn't come with 3D glasses, but it still provides all the benefits of a high-end projector at a fraction of the price.

Katharine Byrne



SPECIFICATIONS

PROJECTOR TYPE DLP
NATIVE RESOLUTION 1,920x1,080
VIDEO INPUTS HDMI, VGA, composite, component, 3D-Sync, 12V trigger, RS232
LAMP LIFE 3,500h
LAMP BRIGHTNESS 2,220 lumen
SIZE 124x286x265mm
WEIGHT 3.8kg
WARRANTY Two-year RTB
DETAILS www.optoma.co.uk
PART CODE HD50