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Harman-Kardon HS250

£ 800 ★★★★★☆

An appealing set-up that puts a convincing case for promoting 2.1 systems

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For

Stylish looks; cohesive, solid sound; clear, detailed picture quality
iPod dock included

Against

Fairly expensive for a 2.1 system; unintuitive remote and overcomplicated menu system

After a couple of years off our radar, Harman Kardon has launched a flotilla of new AV kit. The first product to land at our door is the HS 250BQ 2.1 home cinema in a box.

And what a box. It's large enough to live in, and harbours the main DVD receiver, speakers and speaker stands, and a huge subwoofer. Also included is Harman Kardon's iPod dock, The Bridge.

The fascia of the receiver is clutter-free apart from the DVD slot and rubberised volume control, and even that is flush with the fascia. The subwoofer isn't exactly subtle, but the glossy finish adds class.

It's a shame we can't say the same for the remote control. The buttons are cramped, the layout overcomplicated and the main control buttons are tiny. And the system's menus are long-winded and a pain to navigate.

As for connections, the main unit offers 1080i upscaling over HDMI, and progressive scan via component video. There's a USB input round the back together with sturdy terminals for the speakers.

Impressive all-round performer

And the speakers and subwoofer integrate without a hitch. No aspect of sound is uncomfortable, though we'd like more refinement.

Picture quality at 720p over HDMI is god. Images are stable and it does a good job with blacks and low-light detail. It handles the action of Rambo without any real trace of smearing.

If you fancy a 2.1 system, this is worth a look. Only the shortfall in sonic refinement and the menus stand in the way of a fifth star.