

Yamaha YST-SW1500

Yamaha's space age bass By Max Christoffersen

Yamaha YST-SW1500 subwoofer. \$2999.

If there is a subwoofer God in heaven, his name is Yamaha. Why? Because Yamaha subwoofers come with a remote.

At least the new ASW 1500 subwoofer does.

And for impressive first impressions of this new Yamaha subwoofer, it doesn't get better than this: "A remote? You have got to be kidding – yessssssssss!!!"

What else matters from there? Well, quite a bit really. But you have to be intrigued with a sub that looks as stylish as this one does. No matter what you think of the sonics of the new Yamaha YST-SW1500, you won't forget its appearance. This is the subwoofer George Jetson will own.

It is all shiny aluminium controls and a big port that looks like the end of a trombone that's complemented by a control panel above it that just reeks designer appeal and space age cosmetics.

Subwoofer sculpture

This is possibly the most beautiful piece of subwoofer audio sculpture I've

ever seen. You'd buy this for the cosmetics (and the remote) and still it's not plugged in yet.

So what happened when I did plug it in? That's when things got really interesting.

I've found over time and several subs that they either push my buttons early or it takes a bit of time

to find the room's sweet spot (and mine). And so it was.

The sonic signature that made the earlier Yamaha YST-SW800 so immediately satisfying is absent from the 1500. Like other big driver subwoofers in the same room, this one is going to take some work.

It's not that this doesn't go low. It does. It's not that it doesn't go loud. It does. It's that it doesn't integrate with everything as well as it might and that bass texture sounded just a little bit too woolly to my ears. Usually that's a room placement problem. And so it was.

And the controls that looked so stylish and 'B&O' on the front are fiddly and undo much of the good work of providing front panel access. But full marks for putting them there at all.

Push the Panic Button and leave the premises immediately...

First impressions were that the bass texture was airy rather than punchy. Put it down to that big beautifully sculptured front firing port or Yamaha's 'upside-down-trapezoid-golf-tee' designed to aid bass dispersion or the fact you're moving a big down-firing driver. Or put it down to the room.

But feed it something really low (U571 DVD or Eric Johnson's *Venus Isle*) and it'll go there all right, rounding out sub 30Hz tones with the bass weight typical of high excursion 250 watt subwoofers amplifiers. And that's what you're getting with the new Yamaha.

The sense of bass weight started to verge on the 'fight or flight factor'. That is some serious bottom end that was hitting the primal instinct button that says, this is time to vacate the premises now!

But the bass coherence and smooth extension up the range still seemed to be dominated by the airy nature of the top end bass.

Like the big 15" Paradigm before it, this sub requires a lot space and time to get the most out of it. When it comes to quality bass, (room) size matters and a matter of inches can make a radical difference in performance.



The perfect sub?

And then there's the remote. It's almost perfect. You can choose between three pre-sets, change from 'music' to the more robust 'movie mode', switch phase, turn it up/down or off.

What more could you want? Well a 'mute' switch would have been handy. That would have been perfect.

But don't think the remote is merely couch potato convenience – it's a genuine subwoofer tool.

Ever wanted to know what a slight adjustment might sound like from the listening position while you're at the listening position making that adjustment? See what I mean?

The remote makes set-up so much easier because you're in total control from the best seat in the house.

Given the build quality, user flexibility and the 'what the hell is that thing in the corner?' factor, you've got to say Yamaha is onto a sub that will win many fans over.

But as with any high quality subwoofer, hear before you buy and preferably hear it at your place.

This subwoofer is not toy and it requires careful attention to room placement.

If you find the sweet spot for this sub, stand back and light the fuse.

And you might just want to check the exit doors nearest your seat!

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