



Not Just Flat

Established in 1979, DLS started off by manufacturing music systems for cars and gradually expanded its territory into entertainment speakers. After travelling half the world, DLS comes to India with its latest Flatbox series. These speakers may not be the loudest but are by far the clearest.

This issue, we review a speaker brand that has recently made inroads into rugged Indian terrains. From making 'component kits' for car audio to full-fledged floorstanding speakers, DLS has come a long way, and today is a renowned speaker manufacturer in Scandinavian lands. Since the entire world is shifting loyalty to flat on-wall or in-wall speakers, DLS too has introduced Flatbox series for the Indian audience. It

includes Flatbox Large, Flatbox Mini along with DLS QSub 8.

OUT OF THE BOX

Unlike a lot of other on-wall speaker systems that boast of slim body lines, DLS with its Flatbox series has taken up a unique path. The speakers are intelligently moulded into rectangular boxes, which give them a bi-fold advantage. Firstly, its basic rectangular shape, with no complexity of difficult angles, helps to acquire a slim fit quite easily. Also, the speakers get enough volume and surface area for adequate air movement. As far as the colour of the speaker is concerned, DLS have opted for the most basic yet popular combination of black and white. You can either go for white speakers with black grilles (the ones we received) or vice versa. Apart from this, the speakers are also available in a piano black finish.

TECHNOLOGY

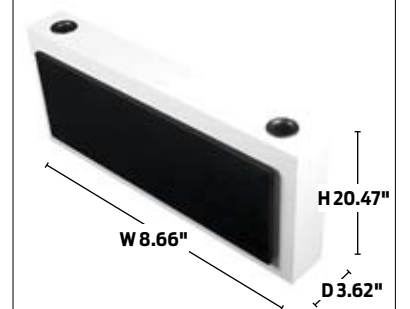
Designing a speaker set has forever been an evolving art. With every latest speaker series that we across a unique design technique. But something new is always accompanied by a great amount of speculation. In the case of Flatbox series, the question was how will such a flat speaker produce heavy sound? This is an expectation that we all have from HT speaker packages. In fact this question is not only for DLS speakers, but it stands true for all on-wall speakers due to their lower frequencies. With not much space available for the air to vibrate within the speaker cabinet, it becomes really difficult for such speakers to produce a convincing low end.

The DLS Flatbox has tiny bass reflex ports that enable the speakers to improve its bass response. Another option is to have a subwoofer, which can help the HT set overcome this limitation. In this case too, there is QSub 8. All the speakers in the flatbox series are made of traditional MDF (Medium Density Fibreboard). The Flatbox Large, which amounts for the LCR, houses a 1.1" silk dome tweeter accompanied by a pair of 3" midrange drivers. The surrounds, the Flatbox Mini, also have the

Specifications

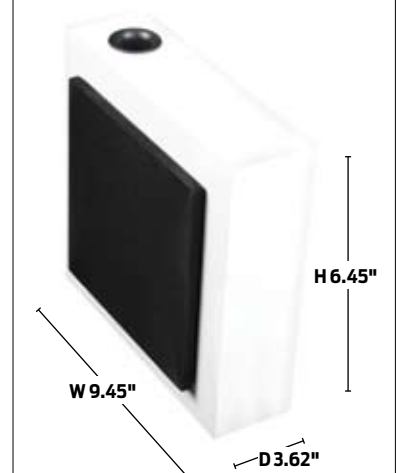
Flatbox Large

- DESIGN** 2-way Bass Reflex
- DRIVERS** 1x1.1" Silk Dome Tweeter, 2x3" Midrange Drivers
- FREQUENCY RESPONSE** 70Hz-25kHz
- NOMINAL IMPEDANCE** 4Ω
- POWER HANDLING** 120W
- SENSITIVITY** 88dB
- WEIGHT** 4.6kg
- DIMENSIONS**



Flatbox Mini

- DESIGN** 2-way Bass Reflex
- DRIVERS** 1x1.1" Silk Dome Tweeter, 2x3" Midrange Drivers
- FREQUENCY RESPONSE** 70Hz-25kHz
- NOMINAL IMPEDANCE** 4Ω
- POWER HANDLING** 120W
- SENSITIVITY** 88dB
- WEIGHT** 2.2kg
- DIMENSIONS**





same tweeter and drivers like the Flatbox Large. For the mid-bass drivers, the surrounds have diffusers made of long-fibre cellulose held by resin bracket. The subwoofer incorporates a variable volume level and a low-pass filter along with phase shift control.

PERFORMANCE

The Flatbox speakers come with screw holes aligned along all sides, which according to us is a great feature. This allows you to mount the DLS Flatbox speakers in any way you want—horizontally or vertically. We tried the speakers in both these positions only to find out that there was no change in the overall sound at all. The drivers are placed right in the centre of the speaker and very close to each other. As a result, there is no effect on the overall sound of the speakers—irrelevant of the way you mount them in. The Flatbox setup

THE SPEAKER'S MID-FREQUENCY RESPONSE WAS EXCELLENT, WHICH HELPED THE FLATBOX LARGE SITTING AS THE CENTRE CHANNEL TO DELIVER DIALOGUES CLEARLY.

was already broken into by the guys at Prince AVC before it came to us. So, we immediately began our first listening session with a familiar multi-channel soundtrack, "How to be a Megastar" by 'Blue Man Group'. Having used this Blu-ray disc quite a few times now, we knew that it's a good test for a new system. The entire disc features

a combination of homemade instruments from PVC pipes to strange whips made of flexible boat antenna that the 'Blue Man Group' refers to as 'Airpoles'.

As it turned out, we slowly got pulled into the Blue world; we were astounded to find out the sound these relatively thin speakers were able to produce since we have heard these tracks on bigger HT speaker packages comprising of floorstanders and bookshelf speakers. Amazingly, the entire setup was in great sync and worked with great coherence throughout all listening sessions.

The next thing that we tested was its dynamic range—a speaker's ability to differentiate between the softest and loudest sound. The best way to check it is to hear a piece at the lowest as well as highest possible volume, and test whether the speakers are able to hold up the channel separation along with the

detail in the sound. As for the DLS speakers, we tried this test using the same 'Blue Man Group' Blu-ray, and got a mixed response from the Flatbox guys. The speakers were stable and composed at moderate listening levels, however they lost slight control either when we tried the lowest possible volume or maximised it.

At moderate listening levels, the speakers were able to segregate every bit of information and made it easy for us to comfortably differentiate between all the elements of the mix. But once we started to pump up the volume, i.e. beyond 80 to 90 percent of its total capacity, it became difficult for the speakers to handle it. And also there was very minimal information transferred when we lowered the volume below 10 percent. But the speaker's mid-frequency response was excellent, which helped the Flatbox Large sitting as the centre channel to deliver dialogues clearly. There's nothing more annoying in a home theatre rig than a muddy centre channel as it will quickly ruin a movie watching experience; no such problem here.

Later, we switched to some Sci-fi action scenes from 'StarTrek'. With the opening scene itself, the Flatbox made its presence felt. The audio in this film pounds all 5.1 channels and I couldn't have been more impressed with the way the speakers meshed with one another. The transition



TRIED & TESTED

HOW TO BE A MEGASTAR LIVE!



Since the music is recorded live, this particular concert by Blue Man Group is filled with great sounds. The sound of each instrument is a thorough test for this setup. The live ambience is captured exceptionally well.

BLU-RAY

from a loud and chaotic prologue to a seemingly quiet opening scene was well-rendered and didn't frustrate the centre channel. The QSub 8 subwoofer and the Flatbox Mini were the stars in this scene, producing necessary low-level bass and rear-channel detail to provide a truly visceral experience.

CONCLUSION

If you ask whether we lose punch when moving from full-fledged HT speakers to on-wall speakers? Sure! However, it depends on how much you lose. In the case of DLS Flatbox speakers, the loss is negligible. The Flatbox turned out to be better than some HT speakers that we have reviewed. Though the speakers are very basic, the common reaction we received after someone had a look at them was "WOW!", closely followed by another question, "Who makes them and how do they sound?" DLS hasn't gone overboard with its aesthetic appeal at the cost of its performance. Instead, they have kept it simple, giving their engineering team plenty of room for improvisation. Consider this system if you want a speaker setup with quality sonic performance and a solid price to performance ratio.

Sumit Bhosle

DLS Flatbox Large/Flatbox Mini/QSub 8

PRICE	₹ 87,150
Flatbox Large	₹ 14,450 (Each)
Flatbox Mini	₹ 17,900 (Pair)
QSub 8	₹ 25,900
WARRANTY	2 Years
CATEGORY	HT Speaker Package
AESTHETICS	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆
AUDIO	★★★★☆
EASE OF USE	★★★★☆
VFM	★★★★☆

WHAT SAY AV?

Priced at Rs 87,150, the DLS speaker setup does come across as a great deal. Yes, it does have its limitations like a slightly lesser dynamic range and a low response when you are playing it at a stupendously high volume. But weigh that against the uber usability, classy looks, above average audio performance and you will know what I am talking about.

OVERALL ★★★★★

CONTACT www.princeavc.com

Specifications

QSub 8

DRIVE UNITS 1x8" Active
FREQUENCY RESPONSE 35Hz-120Hz
POWER 100W
WEIGHT 10.1kg
DIMENSIONS



Backpanel: Speaker



Backpanel: Subwoofer