




With Flatbox XL, DLS is aiming to take a firm grip on the market for generously-sized, yet space-saving speakers. It is not just the stereo speakers, but also the subwoofer that is designed to be mounted on the wall!

Text Thomas Odeltorp Image DLS

Flat

apart from the sound

-  Excellent sound quality
Versatile and good wall mounting solution
Stylish and easy to position
-  Underdimensioned subwoofer
-  High WAF and great sound all in one super sleek package!

In the world of Hi-Fi, we sometimes talk about WAF – an abbreviation for Wife Acceptance Factor. If there is one particular feature that DLS has managed to build into their Flatbox series, it's high WAF. Being able to mount your speakers on the wall frees up valuable floor space. It's not just a question about the ability to vacuum, but it is also more pleasing to the eye.

Acoustically, you would normally like to have your speakers slightly away from the wall, as they otherwise tend to sound enclosed and coloured. As a result, the Flatbox series is designed to take into account the acoustic phenomenon that the speaker encounters when mounted on a wall, and must therefore perform optimally in an otherwise very tricky situation for the speaker.

Stereo speakers with the suffix XL are, as the name suggests, the largest in the series and compared to their older siblings they have had a few detail changes (which also apply to the Midi-model, and soon to the other models in the Flatbox series).

The design with the straight lines is easily recognisable. Small details such as slightly more rounded edges, somewhat bevelled short sides on the fabric fronts, slotted bass ports instead of funnel-shaped openings and the new easy-to-use banana plug press contacts are differences that are noticeable if you compare the XL model with, for example, the Large model from the older generation.

At the same time, the differences are not that great, and you can run XL along with some smaller speakers in the series as a multi-channel system without it looking out of place.

A new, important detail of the latest generation of Flatbox speakers is the soft "rubber feet" which means that the speakers come out a few millimetres from the rear wall, therefore allowing the speaker cable to run freely. The feet also have threads which means you can easily compensate if your wall is not entirely even.

When it comes to colour choices, DLS has made it fairly easy. The standard is satin white as most people still have light walls. For an extra SEK 500 you can buy speakers in black piano lacquer. Flatbox comes with black and white fabric fronts to blend into the surroundings. If we are being really pedantic, the fabrics are not really white, and Hans Hidstam at DLS explains that the very light grey shade is selected in view of the fact that a snow-white fabric would exhibit dust rings after a period of use where the bass elements are located. This would not look too good!

Behind the fabric fronts there is a feature consisting of two 4-inch woofers flanking a 30-millimetre dome tweeter. The feature has a fairly classic in design, but reports show that it has been rigorously tested to suit the application.

The subwoofer shares its design with the rest of the series. The front has an 8-inch element with an apparently rigid cone and solid edge mount. The output stage that delivers 150 watts is analogue and is located on the back. As it could be a little difficult getting the proper settings on the back of a wall-mounted subwoofer, the adjustment knobs are located on the front.

DLS has opted for a simple solution with keyhole mounts for the suspension. As mounting must still be reasonable in practice, a number of brackets have been provided. The suspension is not the only contact with the wall. A set of screw-in rubber feet allow the boxes to hang free against uneven walls, which also applies to the subwoofer.

As a bonus, you can hang both the speakers and the subwoofer either horizontally or vertically.

I remember from earlier tests on Flatbox models a large and well-articulated sound. The XL model is no exception and feels like one of the family from a tonality aspect.

Lack of space: Space is extremely confined at the back when mounting on the wall. For this reason, you will find all the adjustment knobs on the front instead. The power cable and RCA connectors are angled to fit.



This is actually not too bad, as the Flatbox series generally sounds together and tight, while the acoustic image, especially the XL, is great. A wall-mounted speaker often finds it difficult to reproduce the depth in the acoustic image. It feels like an acoustic impossibility, and even Flatbox XL is affected by a not entirely convincing 3D feel. However, positioning vertically and horizontally presents no major problems. The style of play is open and together with its responsive touch, it feels that the speakers are involved in the music.

The high level of detail is presented nicely enough as a matter of course, which makes me listen primarily to the music as a whole. The bass is nicely matched with the system, but I would recommend an additional subwoofer if the room is larger than about 20 square metres. An 8-inch woofer has to work hard when the volume is turned up, which of course increases the distortion. Despite having to work hard, the Flatsub 8 behaves really well, and plays relatively deep but above all clean. The transients are distinct without the bass feeling weak. You can see that the system is designed for wall mounting when, out of curiosity, I placed the speakers in the more traditional way. All the body is lost and I hang up the Flatboxes again to restore order.

The TV designer team Simon & Thomas,

the majority of professional users such as restaurants and public venues have chosen the Flatbox series. I understand why, as it has a design with full sound, especially the XL model which is also ideal in larger rooms. However, I do feel that the subwoofer could have been a few dB stronger. The bass is really good, but in a larger room more quantity is needed if it is to match the stereo speakers. Here, you will also find room to experiment, and if you have around a half square metre of floor space free, you can also go for a more conventional subwoofer solution, which in most cases gives more bass energy for your money.

The back has no less than seven keyhole mounts. This will ensure secure suspension. A new feature for the latest generation of Flatbox compared to previous models is the adjustable rubber knobs that allow you to adjust the speakers to the wall.

The acoustic image is far from a flat (!) case, although a traditional stereo pair positioned on a stand can achieve greater depth in the image – which is evident in a direct comparison, but you would hardly notice otherwise. What you do notice, however, is what you see, and visually Flatbox is flexible enough to suit even the most aesthetic of would-be-buyers of audio systems, which in the case of XL and Flatsub 8 requires no audible compromises. H&M

DLS Flatbox XL

Price SEK 7,000/pair in white, SEK 7,500 in glossy black

Function Speakers for wall mounting

Type 2 way bass reflex

Features 2x4 inch woofers, 30-millimetre tweeter

Nominal impedance 4 ohm

Specified sensitivity 89 dB

Dimensions (WxHxD) 22x63x9.2

cm

Weight 5.9 kg

DLS Flatsub 8

Price SEK 5,500 in white, SEK 6,000 in glossy black

Function Active subwoofer for wall mounting

Feature 8-inch base

Specified output 150W

Crossover frequency 40-150 Hz

Switch Off/auto/on

Phase 0-180 degrees (infinitely)

Inputs High-level, low level

Outputs -

Dimensions (WxHxD) 42.5x33.5x13.5 cm

Weight 11.2 kg

Info www.dls.se