

## NEC VT47 Home Cinema Projector

Posted on 08 November 2004 11:40 GMT by Debbie Davies

Gizmogirl has long been baffled by the interest in home cinema systems. Even the jargon 'home cinema in a box' makes little sense when the product is most often a collection of surround sound speakers and a DVD player. Since when has hooking up a DVD player to an amplifier, five speakers and a subwoofer turned a television into a cinema? Isn't cinema about a shaft of light projecting a moving image? If home cinema means anything then surely it means a home projector.

This is what NEC has in mind with its latest budget projector. It is not just the price that is minimalist. If 62inch (1.6metres) plasma screens weighing over 60kg make you long for a minimalist solution, then the VT47 is it. Far from taking over your living space, you hardly notice the tiny 2.9kg projector when switched off. Turn it on and it takes over the room, easily projecting a brilliant 56inch (1.4metres) picture onto a white wall from 1.8metres when we tested it. We plugged it straight into a Sky + box doing away completely with the need for a television. We left out a screen too, projecting images straight onto the wall. For anyone who hates televisions but nevertheless wants to watch TV, this aesthetic solution works really well.

Given the budget price, NEC can be forgiven for leaving out the cables for connecting up all your devices. The projector has no Scart connector because NEC deemed it would dominate the diminutive interface. Instead it has 2 PC inputs as well as 1 output and a composite and S-video input. A separate adapter is required for component video, which gives the best image quality from devices with high definition pictures. Given that the projector is so small - it measures a neat 294x260x93mm - you can easily move it and can use the versatile interface to connect it to different devices. We hooked up a PC online to watch a live concert over broadband as the backdrop to a party. Like the projectionist Alfredo in Cinema Paradiso, we turned our projector so the picture was huge across a wall and up onto the ceiling. We also played a panoramic game of GTA San Andreas by plugging in a PlayStation. Setting up devices is simple since the connections are colour-coded.

The brightness level (1500 lumens) is higher than you would expect on a budget projector. Daytime viewing is possible without closing the curtains although a lot of the impact is lost (the replacement cost of at least £200 for a bulb that lasts around 2000 hours makes projectors a poor choice for all day TV). It scores well on decibels at a quiet 28dB. The projector's picture stats remind you that this is a budget machine. Resolution is cheaper SVGA 800x600 with a contrast ratio of 400:1. Aspect ratio is 4x3 not 16x9. This means widescreen pictures fit less well and lose a little at the side edges. But before being tempted to pay a lot more for a premium model with XGA resolution and contrast ratios up to 3500:1, ask yourself how much picture you want.

The VT47 is designed to project images up to 2.7metres but if half this size suffices, (which is still bigger than most big screen plasmas that cost several thousand pounds), then the picture quality on this projector should please everybody. Almost everything we watched looked beautiful. In particular, the BBC's output looks stunning, especially big production series like the current Himalayas. Even Eastenders looks fantastic. The only picture that fell short was a live UEFA Champions League football game broadcast on Sky. James Murdoch needs to watch out. An affordable projector like the VT47 plugged into an affordable, high definition Freeview set top box, might make you think twice about who is leading the way when it comes to the smartest TV.

### **VERDICT**

Projectors do for TV what iPod has done for music: both are pieces of technology that change the way we use media. Projectors just lack Apple's marketing. Most of us think of them as those hot, noisy things that we slept through at school, and which are boring us still with deadly Powerpoint presentations. Nothing could be further from the truth. There are plenty of gadgets that can turn you into a bore, but a projector for home cinema is not one of them.

**OUR SCORE:**

**9/10**

**READER SCORE:**

**9.2 /10**