

LG SK10Y review

Can LG's flagship Dolby Atmos soundbar justify its lofty price tag... *Tested at £1200*

★★★★★ By [What Hi-Fi?](#) May 23, 2018 [Review](#)



OUR VERDICT

If you can accommodate its size, the SK10Y is a premium Dolby Atmos soundbar that's well worth an audition

✚ FOR

- Expansive, immersive sound
- Clear dialogue
- Good detail in mids and highs
- Atmos speakers work well

✚ AGAINST

- Dynamics aren't as strong as class-leaders
- Bass lacks solidity and drive
- Can't fully decode DTS-HD Master Audio soundtracks

Over the past few years, it's fair to say the performance of LG's soundbars has been less than stellar. In fact, you have to go back to 2014 to find the last model we deemed worthy of more than three stars. And it only cost £190.

Skip forward to 2018 and we find ourselves unboxing its top-of-the-range Dolby Atmos model. You can see why we might approach the LG SK10Y with a sense of trepidation...



Build

Straight away we can tell that the SK10Y won't be for everyone. Not because it sounds bad, but because of its sheer size. At 144cm wide, it's aimed at owners of large flatscreens – we're talking 55in minimum, although the soundbar is more suited to 65in models.

You might also want to measure the width of your TV rack so you're happy with any overhang. There's always the option to wall-mount (brackets and wall template are included in the box).

Alternatively, if you happen to own a compatible 2018 LG TV (B8 and C8 OLEDs or SK8500 and SK9500 Super UHD TVs are supported), there's an optional 'Perfect Fit' stand. Also known as the TK10, it attaches to your TV with the SK10Y sliding onto its feet for a more integrated look.

Despite the width, the SK10Y is still a relatively slender design and stands only 63mm tall. The bar squeezes in a 5.1.2 speaker set-up. The '.2' refers to two upfiring drivers at either end of the bar, angled at 20 degrees to attempt to deliver a convincing Dolby Atmos experience.

You'll also need to find a suitable space to accommodate the soundbar's wireless subwoofer. In a corner or up against a rear wall, close to the SK10Y is fine. If it sounds a bit boomy, try positioning it with the bass port firing out into your room, or move it further out into the room.

The top of the SK10Y is clean and uncluttered. The position of the upfiring speakers is given away by the two circular grilles and there are touch sensitive buttons in the centre for power, volume, wi-fi and switching inputs.

You'll also spot a subtle 'with Meridian technology' logo on the left hand side. Following on from the WK7 smart speaker, the SK10Y is another product born out of LG's recent partnership with British hi-fi stalwart Meridian.

Its expertise in sound processing and speaker design has influenced the SK10Y's design, including a switch from silk to aluminium dome tweeters and a new internal layout. Each speaker is mounted inside its own enclosure instead of sitting in an open chamber.



Features

The LG doesn't send an on-screen display to your TV, instead it uses a scrolling display, positioned on the front of the soundbar. It's bright, clear and easy to read and turns itself off after 15 seconds, so it doesn't distract in a dark room.

Around the rear of the bar are a couple of 4K-compatible HDMI inputs and one output. There's also an optical input, 3.5mm aux in and an ethernet connection.

Get the SK10Y onto your home network and with built-in Chromecast part of the feature set, you can stream audio from compatible devices and apps to the bar.

The SK10Y natively supports hi-res audio up to 24-bit/192kHz and upsamples any incoming audio to the same rate. Bluetooth connectivity is also included.

The LG is geared up for Dolby Atmos soundtracks and is able to decode them natively, as it is with Dolby True HD soundtracks on Blu-ray discs.

The only downside is that it can't fully decode DTS HD Master Audio soundtracks. Instead the soundbar strips out the core DTS mix and processes the audio to try and deliver an Atmos-like effect.

You can control the SK10Y a couple of different ways. First, there's the standard remote, which is a stubby, palm-sized affair. The main volume buttons are big and easy to distinguish in the dark, which is useful given the lack of a backlight.

Hit the 'F' button (for Function) to scroll through the soundbar's different inputs. The 'Sound Effect' button allows you to cycle through five different audio presets: ASC (Adaptive Sound Control, Bass Blast, Standard, Movie and Music).

However, when listening to a movie with a Dolby Atmos soundtrack, you're locked out of these presets. You can alter the speaker levels, with subwoofer, treble, bass can all be adjusted, as can the OVC or Overhead Volume Control, which tweaks the level of involvement of the upfiring speakers.

Interestingly, there's no way you can dial in your distance from the soundbar or the height of your room. Both these would help the soundbar tailor the sound even more accurately for your listening position.

When not listening to a Dolby Atmos soundtrack, we recommend sticking with Standard (the main Meridian-tuned processing mode) when playing Blu-rays and DVDs, and switching to Music when you stream audio to the bar via Chromecast or Bluetooth. Movie sounds wide and expansive, but lacks focus.

Besides the remote control, you can also fire up LG's Wi-Fi Speaker app for Android and iOS. It's easy to use, and gives you access to all the same controls and settings, but after our first experience we don't rush back to use it.



Sound

We start with Kingsman: The Golden Circle on 4K Blu-ray. The credits roll and the LG SK10Y bursts into life. A blast of 20th Century Fox fanfare is a simple yet effective test tune and the LG handles it well. There's no harsh edge as the orchestra explodes into life. There's also a good sense of clarity and a decent level of detail.

As the opening chapter unfolds and Eggsy and Charlie scrap in the back of a black cab, the LG handles the action with a decent level of control. With every bang and crash, the SK10Y shows a pleasant sweetness at the top end.

Breaking glass doesn't sound too harsh, while gunfire displays texture and sounds believable.

Skipping forward to the dialogue-heavy scene between Poppy (Julianne Moore) and her associates, the LG has no problem delivering the lines in a clear and concise manner.

It does a fine job of capturing the madness in Poppy's voice as she condemns Charles to the human mincing machine. A hint of hardness can creep in at times, but only when pushed above average listening levels.

It can be tough for a soundbar to truly immerse you in the action, so it's a big plus that the LG throws out effects in a convincing manner.

Play Spiderman: Homecoming in Dolby Atmos, and as Spiderman and the Vulture do battle on the Staten Island ferry, you get a great sense of the action. As the Vulture swoops across the sky, the LG tracks his movement between channels and presents it in an open and airy manner.

The impact of the upfiring speakers can be heard, adding to the experience rather than detracting from it. When the high-tech weapon malfunctions and starts firing out bursts of energy upwards and out into the ship, the LG delivers scale and height and sends the effects up and above your head.

But the same scene highlights the LG's shortcomings too. In terms of drama and dynamics, rival soundbars like the Sony HT-ST5000 have the edge. The SK10Y could display a little more weight and drive, as the pulses from the weapon don't have quite the same the punch, nor do they sound solid enough.

Iron Man arrives to save the day and fires his thrusters to help push the two halves of the ferry together. There's a real shift in dynamics that the LG doesn't quite capture. As he ramps up the power and ferocity of the thrusters, the SK10Y doesn't mirror this in the sound that comes out.

Stream Tidal or Spotify and the LG sounds perfectly acceptable in Music mode, although it does make that lack of drive more apparent. The bass notes to Haim's Running If You Call My Name sound more like a flick than a thump, as the soundbar struggles to match the song's rhythm stride for stride.

Verdict

Launching a £1200 soundbar was an ambitious and bold move by LG and the SK10Y should be applauded.

We couldn't describe it as the perfect soundbar, but it shows definite progress for a company whose audio products have struggled in recent times. Fingers crossed it's a positive sign for the rest of its upcoming audio kit.