



Mark Craven hears a premium-priced soundbar that wants to bring hi-fi quality audio to your TV viewing

Stereo sounds so good

The first product from Danish start-up brand Canvas HiFi is a premium soundbar cut from a different cloth. Big, heavy and expensive, it has no truck with Dolby Atmos or DTS:X, sports minimal connectivity, and doesn't even ship with a remote control. But at the same time, it's rather good.

Canvas HiFi has confusingly chosen to call this soundbar Canvas, but I will give it a pass when it comes to product naming as it's clearly had its focus elsewhere. Specifically, on designing a soundbar with plenty of screen matching potential. This also makes describing the Canvas rather confusing, so here goes.

At the base level price of €2,990 (the company sells direct with free shipping – but a fee for returns – and is in the process of adding UK retailers), there's the Canvas Solo. This gets you the soundbar, a matching magnetic cloth grille in black or grey, and a desktop stand that can be inverted to act as a wall-mount. This package will be fine for many buyers, and as the soundbar is the right width to match a slim bezel 55in TV, you can get your system looking nice and neat.

Then come the grille customisation options, which are in more eye-catching cloth colours (Burnt Umber, etc) for an extra €300, and mahogany, walnut and light oak real wood for a wallet-worrying €1,100 premium. Yet not only can these be bought at the standard size, they're available larger to match screens at 65in, 75in and 77in, all fitting firmly onto the Canvas bar so you wouldn't know the difference in size of the hardware behind.

Want more? The premium Canvas package, again available with different sized grilles in different colours/materials, includes a heavyweight stand with a back plate with VESA fixing holes. This enables you to mount both screen and soundbar onto the same hardware, resulting in an almost one-piece finish. It's a self-assembly job, with numerous screws and stages, but once complete – in my case

using a TCL C765 55in TV – it looks really rather swish. The design of the soundbar and stand allows for tidy cabling, too.

Regardless of how you install the Canvas, the setup procedure is the same. Hook the soundbar to your TV via its single HDMI ARC socket (other connections are 3.5mm and Toslink), plug in its mains cable, and download the Canvas HiFi app to your smartphone.

This piece of custom software is fairly basic, as outside of changing inputs and tweaking volume its main focus is on calibration (rather than, say, integrating streaming services – your options instead are Chromecast, AirPlay, Tidal Connect, Spotify Connect and DLNA, with Room Ready certification apparently in the pipeline). And owners of Apple iPhones are the winners here, as Canvas's room calibration routine only works on those devices. Android users are out of luck, and are pointed in the direction of an optional Zen microphone for €149. At the price of the Canvas, you might have expected that to be included.



I'll be BACCH

The soundbar comes in one finish (black) and its MDF cabinet, with what Canvas HiFi calls internal BridgeBrace architecture, looks and feels rock solid. The front face, some 37cm tall, is mostly filled by its six drive units sourced from Denmark's SB Acoustics.

Two silk dome tweeters, with Canvas HiFi's own waveguide design, sit at the far ends. Next in line are two 6.5in bass/mid drivers, followed by two 'racetrack'-style passive radiators. Behind are four Class D amp modules combining for 250W of grunt, plus DSP/crossover electronics incorporating BACCH 3D crosstalk cancellation. This natty technology, developed by Princeton University

AV INFO

PRODUCT: High-end stereo soundbar

POSITION: Currently Canvas HiFi's only model

PEERS: Sennheiser Ambeo MAX; Devialet Dione; B&O Beosound Stage

1. You can wall-mount Canvas HiFi's bar via a supplied bracket that doubles as a tabletop stand

2. Exploded view shows the bar's six active/passive drivers, BridgeBrace MDF cabinet construction, and optional VESA compatible stand





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boffin Edgar Choueiri (he's done a lot – Google him), is intended to bring 'true 3D stereo imaging' to two-channel audio. It can be switched on/off in the app.

Emotional rescue

Regardless of the incoming source signal, the Canvas soundbar outputs stereo – but, compared to a common or garden soundbar, it's stereo with bells on. What's great about its performance is the sheer depth to the bass output, which is class-leading; the effortless control of mid-range tones and textures; and the natural feel of its staging. The BACCH 3D processing is subtle, so there's none of the overt – and often distracting and artificial-sounding – effects 'placement' of other soundbars. The result is easy emotional involvement with whatever you're watching.

Over the course of five weeks in my living room, the Canvas has brought its talents to movies, regular TV

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watching and music. And every time it has impressed me. Dialogue handling, as evidenced through a belated binge watch of *Stranger Things* (Netflix), is excellent; voices sound lifelike and distinct, and are well projected. The size and nature of the show's locations are easily conveyed, subtle ambient cues readily apparent. The title music, with its metallic synths so reminiscent of John Carpenter, sounds liquid-smooth.

As then there's the low-end, to which the only word is 'yikes'. The impact of the Canvas's bass/mid driver and passive partners is always there – quietly assured when needed, such as when Joyce (Winona Ryder) is hammering nails into the walls of her house in episode three, and

SPECIFICATIONS

DRIVERS: 2 x 29mm silk dome waveguided tweeters; 2 x 6.5in paper cone bass/mid drivers; 2 x passive radiators **ONBOARD POWER (CLAIMED):** Four-channel, 250W **CONNECTIONS:** HDMI eARC; 3.5mm/Toslink optical; USB (service) **DOLBY ATMOS/ DTS:X:** No/No **SEPARATE SUB:** No **REMOTE CONTROL:** No. Use TV learning or app instead **DIMENSIONS:** 1,226(w) x 369(h) x 126(d)mm (incl. 55in grille and on-wall mount) **WEIGHT:** 38kg

FEATURES: BACCH 3D crosstalk cancellation; Class D amplification; Burr-Brown 192kHz/24-bit DACs; Analog Devices quad-core DSP; room correction via iOS app or optional Zen microphone (Android); Wi-Fi; Apple AirPlay 2; Google Cast; Tidal; Spotify Connect; Canvas HiFi app; 24-litre MDF cabinet with BridgeBrace architecture; size/colour grille options; desktop/wall-mount stand supplied

TESTED WITH



BEVERLY HILLS COP: AXEL F: Eddie Murphy's return to his most famous role, available on Netflix, is a delight. Yes, the plot largely rehashes that of the original, but who doesn't want to see Taggart and Rosewood shooting up a mansion again? The Atmos soundtrack is equally fun – even mixed down through a stereo soundbar...

slamming hard and deep when the soundtrack demands it. This is a soundbar made for jump scares.

Watching *Beverly Hills Cop: Axel F* (Netflix) via the Canvas actually bought a lump to my throat, such was the energy and musicality given to the film's oh-so-nostalgic soundtrack. Lorne Balfé's reworking of Harold Faltermeyer's original score in particular was spine-tingling in its clarity, richness and weight. Canvas HiFi makes a lot of its bar's 'hi-fi' side and it lives up to billing, albeit with a slightly narrower soundstage than if you were to set up a pair of separate speakers. Music tracks, played via Tidal, showcased fine upper-band detail, strong central imaging and a humongous dynamic range.

Raising the bar

Anyone seeking Atmos immersion, or surround thrills, from a soundbar should look elsewhere – that's not what this premium Danish offering is all about. Instead, the Canvas focuses on the 'basics', and knocks them out of the park. The cost of entry is high, but it's immensely rewarding ■

HCC VERDICT



Canvas HiFi Canvas

→ From €2,990 → www.canvashifi.com

WE SAY: For sheer involvement in movies, TV or music, this 'bar takes some beating thanks to its astonishing full-range sound. But do borrow an iPhone for setup if you don't have one...

3. Larger grilles are available for TVs at 65in, 75in and 77in

4. The Canvas's 6.5in bass/mid drivers are backed up by passive radiators

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