

Jamo's movie blockbuster

Jamo D6PTX
Multichannel
speaker package
£1499
★★★★★

FOR

Intense movie
performance for your
pound; neat design;
relatively compact
for THX speakers;
huge bass weight

AGAINST

Not great hi-fi

VERDICT

If you want a system
to deliver fabulous
movie sound for a
sensible price, this
is a must-see

TECHNICALLY SPEAKING

D6LCR fronts

Bass drivers 2 x 165mm
Midrange drivers 2 x 95mm
Tweeter 1 x 25mm
Frequency response 80Hz-20kHz
Impedance 4 ohms
Sensitivity 89dB/w/m
Dimensions (hwd) 29 x 60 x 15cm

D6SUB

Driver 38cm
Power 400w
Frequency response 20Hz-200Hz
Dimensions (hwd) 44 x 45 x 44cm

D6SUR

Bass driver 16.5cm
Midrange drivers 2 x 9.5cm
Tweeters 2 x 25mm
Frequency response 80Hz-20kHz
Dimensions (hwd) 21 x 44 x 15cm



Jamo THX package:
great with movies,
less so with music

LET'S CLEAR SOMETHING up right from the off: if you're in the market for a speaker package to serve as a hi-fi and home cinema set-up, stop reading now - Jamo's D6PTX package just isn't for you.

But that doesn't stop it from getting a good review, and here's why: if you want a cracking home cinema set-up - and nothing more - then you probably won't find a better value proposition. The D6PTX is about great movie sound, pure and simple, and if that's what you want then it's an undoubted bargain.

Designed to meet the THX Ultra specification the D6PTX gives you a lot of surround sound for just £1500. The package employs all the core technologies that make THX systems so well-suited to the home cinema task, from dipole (multi-directional) surround speakers to front speakers with carefully controlled vertical dispersion, all of which can be wall mounted. Yet it costs scarcely more than many conventional packages. True, those technologies come at a sonic price - hi-fi performance - but they certainly aid the movie sound experience: the D6PTX offers warmth, weight, composure and sheer cinematic quality.

The basic package comprises three identical D6LCR (left, centre, right) speakers for front effects, two D6SUR dipole rears and one mighty monster of a sub, the D6SUB. Toting a 38cm driver and powered by no less than 400w of output, it's not exactly the shy, retiring type. The sheer force this beast imparts is jaw-dropping - that old American adage about there being 'no substitute for cubic inches' couldn't be

more apt. Dial up a potent action movie - old blood'n'thunder favourite *Pearl Harbor* should do the trick - and you'll be thrilled by the sheer weight of the biggest explosions.

But it's not all about bass - the other speakers in the system play an equally significant role. The balance across the front is blisteringly powerful when required, but the sound doesn't harden up with volume or dynamics - the Jamo retains the richness of tone and fullness of balance that commonly characterises the very best THX kit, while dialogue is both wonderfully clear and tonally full.

The D6SUR dipoles, meanwhile, wrap you in sound impressively - they're not the best dipoles we've heard, but they're far from being the worst. You can add an extra D6SUR for just £200 (to go for a 6.1 set-up), while the full seven-speaker THX-EX monty can be yours for just under £3000.

Brickbats? Only one, and it's the one we've mentioned: this is no hi-fi set-up. Stereo sound suffers from slow, muddy bass and a lack of precision to the image.

“Dial up a potent action movie and you'll be thrilled by the sheer weight of the explosions”

LEADING RIVALS

B&W DM 603 S3 System

£1850 ★★★★★ August 2003
Powerful, high-quality sound but front speakers need space

Mordaunt-Short 500 THX Select

£1600 ★★★★★ September 2002
Fine THX performance in a neat package; £180 extra for seven speakers

But THX speakers aren't designed for that: they're designed to function as part of a 'front three' in home cinema, and as we've said, the Jamos do that very well indeed. So if movies are your bag and you can spare a quid under £1500, the D6PTX has to go right to the top of your 'must-see' list.

INSIDE INFO



THX: take your pick

THX kit comes in three main flavours: THX Select, for smaller rooms and budgets; THX Ultra2 for cost-no-object seven-speaker rigs; and the middle, original THX Ultra spec. The D6PTX meets this last standard, which like the others lays down specific guidelines for sound dispersion, bass performance and much, much more. You don't have to use a THX-certified receiver or processor / power with the Jamo, though it's best to opt for a product that offers an 80Hz crossover point for speaker size settings (as many Denon receivers do), since this will provide the optimum bass management and speaker protection.



Jamo D 6PTX

Are you a serious movie fan? One who puts a specifically cinematic audio experience ahead of music listening? Then this THX-certified speaker package may be for you

I like THX kit. Always have. That's not to say that I'll always go for a THX-certified design over another if the 'other' happens to sound better – it just means that the THX design approach makes sense to me.

I fully appreciate that most systems of this ilk are 'musically challenged', but that's a bit like complaining that a Lotus Elise isn't a very good estate car. It's not meant to be: rather, it's a focused piece of design aimed at performing a specific task to the highest standard. If that means making compromises, well, so be it.

So let's skip through the obvious flaws in Jamo's THX-approved D 6PTX first. This speaker package is not going to generate a stereo image: THX speakers are too specific in their dispersion characteristics to do that. In fact, they're not designed as stereo speakers at all, as the whole point of the exercise is that all three front speakers in a THX array are identical. You shouldn't consider them as a 'stereo plus centre' combination: they're a trio, and only really work properly if listened to in that fashion.

When you want to listen to music, do so using a multichannel music mode, so that the centre speaker contributes by 'filling-in' the soundstage. And don't forget that all the bass in the system is generated by the subwoofer. The D 6SUB, while a potent performer, is undoubtedly more comfortable with movie weight than musical pace, which inevitably means that some music can sound bloated and muddy.

None of this stops me from liking this package enormously. As a home cinema system – and I mean, specifically, a system for films, not an all-purpose affair – there's no better-value solution on the market. Most rivals in this class are either compact subwoofer/satellite designs or packages based on conventional hi-fi loudspeaker design but the D 6PTX is far more acutely targeted. It's constructed to meet the THX Ultra specification. This may be the oldest of the three performance levels now used by George Lucas' company but it's still a strict measure of sonic performance, even by the most modern standards.

This is not a speaker system made for general purposes: it's designed from scratch to work with film soundtracks

In its standard 5.1 form, the Jamo package is composed of three identical D 6LCR front speakers, two D 6SUR dipole enclosures for 'rear' use (which, like most dipoles, are actually best positioned alongside your seat), and the aforementioned subwoofer, a 400w, 38cm-driver monster.

This being a Jamo system, there's more to the detail of the various elements than simple compliance with a set of predetermined specifications. Typically, the Danish firm has taken the opportunity to apply a degree of original thinking to a conventionally fairly prosaic field of speaker design. So each component is designed for the minimum possible depth, and each (save the subwoofer, of course) is designed to be wall-mounted, both to aid aesthetics and to maximise the boundary-reinforcement effect.

In a further nod to style, the latest version of the Jamo package wears optional brushed aluminium trim. In its original form, it came finished in a businesslike

charcoal grey – this is still available, and I feel only adds to its sense of menacing purpose. Some might see the bright metal as an improvement, and if you go in for the wall-mounted, same-colour-as-your-plasma-display approach to installation so beloved of upmarket lifestyle mags, well, fair enough – the new look makes sense.

To me, the convincing advantage of the dark grey finish is that it was designed expressly not to intrude – in fact, the non-reflective surface helps to preserve the light integrity of a dedicated home cinema room. Still, you pay your money...

No matter. Fancified cosmetics can't disguise the honest home cinema heart beating within this system – it just sounds great, whatever the movie, and more importantly, whatever your particular sonic preferences. Naturally, the bottom end is fabulous: if you like your movies served up deep and scary, the D 6SUB will readily oblige, muscling its way through the fullest low frequencies in big-bass movies such as *Pearl Harbor* and *Apollo 13*. It's not the most agile subwoofer around, occasionally sounding a little blurred around the edges with the very fastest of low-frequency shifts, but in the main, the sheer authority it imparts (especially for the price) is exhilarating... as is the rest of the front soundfield, in fact.

The balance is terrifically weighty and engaging, yet marries that power and scale to refinement and composure, even under severe sonic duress. Just when smaller speaker systems sound as if they're about to give way under the strain of the moment, the Jamo drops a gear and kicks on to new dynamic heights. Small details are precisely highlighted, yet the presentation never lapses into brittle, hard excess. Equally, voices have excellent character and realism, even when playing

NEED TO KNOW...

Price £1500

D 6LCR FRONT SPEAKERS

Drive units 2x16.5cm bass, 2x9.5cm midrange, 1x25mm tweeter
Frequency response 80Hz-20kHz
Impedance 4 ohms
Sensitivity 85dB/2.8v/1m
Dimensions (hwxwd) 27x60x15cm

D 6SUR REAR SPEAKERS

Drive units 1x16.5cm bass, 2x9.5cm midrange, 2x25mm tweeter
Frequency response 80Hz-20kHz
Impedance 4 ohms
Sensitivity 85dB/2.8v/1m
Dimensions (hwxwd) 27x44x15cm

D 6SUB SUBWOOFER

Drive units 1x38cm bass
Frequency response 28Hz-200Hz
Power 400w
Dimensions (hwxwd) 44x45x44cm

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at a level that most of us would consider decidedly 'neighbour-unfriendly'.

One contributory factor to the package's sonic integrity is that, as with any THX set-up, bass management is appreciably easier than you'd think. Simply select the THX 80Hz mode on your receiver or

You don't have to use THX kit if you don't want to. Denon and Onkyo receivers usually offer 80Hz crossover points and can be used almost as effectively as 'full-house' THX designs

amplifier (or the Lexicon MC-12B processor I used), and all crossover and speaker protection issues are taken care of. On that subject, by the way, you don't have to use THX kit if you don't want to. Denon and Onkyo receivers usually offer 80Hz crossover points, whether THX-certified or not, and so can be used almost as effectively as 'full-house' THX designs. Both these manufacturers also include THX-style re-equalisation (a high-frequency roll-off, in effect) among the configuration options for even their affordable receivers – another reason why the Jamo set-up works well with a wider range of partnering kit than you might at first imagine.

Time for me to wrap things up. The D 6SUR rear speakers are best employed mounted high on the wall and alongside your listening position. If you want to go for a 6.1 or seven-speaker array, with either one or two centre-rear speakers mounted behind your seat, you simply purchase additional speakers, at a very reasonable £200 a time. They work well, spreading surround information around you very effectively and providing exactly the kind of ambient, non-directional spatial cues that

any self-respecting THX rear should. I enjoyed listening to them immensely; perhaps, though, they could be better matched to their front-speaker siblings. They're a little less weighty and full than the front speakers, so that, even with THX 'timbre-matching' post-processing in place,

you can detect some shifts in tonality as effects pans move from the front to the back of the room or vice-versa.

That's about all there is to say about drawbacks, though. As I hope I made clear already, I like this package a lot. Combine it with a decent receiver (no matter whether it's THX Select, THX Ultra, THX Ultra 2 or just plain old 'ordinary') and you'll have a fine-sounding, cinematic set-up for what is, in context, a very affordable sum.

Andy Kerr

JAMO D 6PTX £1500

The score

91%

Home Cinema verdict

Offers excellent performance for the money. For £1500 you'll struggle to beat it on any home cinema criteria you care to mention. Not the most musical of set-ups, it's true, but then this is a home cinema magazine, isn't it?



In their latest form these speakers are available with aluminium trim but the functionally preferable plain matt grey is an option





Castle Compact CC3 £1000

↑ FOR
Surprising power and integration for speakers so small; these Castles are beautifully finished

↓ AGAINST
Nothing of any significance

→ VERDICT
A really classy little subwoofer and satellites system that's as excellent with music as it is with movies



THIS IS A remarkably dinky system, with the four main speakers just 20cm tall, and the Cube subwoofer around 35cm square. There's a dedicated centre speaker, and should you want to use dipole rears rather than conventional satellites, matching units are available. The package price is £1000, but the components are available separately: the satellites are £230 a pair, the centre £180 and the subwoofer just under £400.

The most striking thing about the sound is how even-handed and well-balanced it is, and how well the small speakers integrate with each other and the sub. We tried various crossover settings, settling eventually for 100Hz, and in the absence of the wall-mounts for the speakers we used them on stands right against the front and rear walls, the sub down beside the left speaker, and the centre sitting below the screen in the TV stand.

After a couple of day's use to let the bass fill out and tighten, and the treble smooth off a shade from its initial slight sharpness, the Castle system delivered a winning performance, whether playing music or movie sound from DVD. With the beautifully detailed soundtrack of *Finding Nemo* it allows the enveloping underwater ambience to wrap around impressively, keeps voices crystal-clear, and has all the slam you could want. It's also just as good powering out an action movie's battle sequences.

As we've mentioned, it sounds excellent with music, too, with just the front pair of satellites and the sub running in stereo, and really comes into its own with multi-channel sound from SACD. Roxey Music's *Avales* had superb ambience and presence, with good rhythmic drive, fine bass power and crisp, vibrant instrumental timbres, and the same attributes also served well Channel Classic's set of Vivaldi violin concertos, *La Stravaganza*.

In summary, this Castle set-up is a stylish excellent all-rounder.

AT A GLANCE...

SUBWOOFER YES	BIWIRE NO
CENTRE SIZE 14x32x16cm	POWER HANDLING 70 WATTS



Jamo D6PTX £1499

↑ FOR
Exciting movie performance for your pound; neat design; relatively compact for THX speakers; huge bass weight

↓ AGAINST
Below-par hi-fi performance

→ VERDICT
If you want a system to deliver fabulous movie sound for a sensible price, this is a must-hear



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D6SUR dipole rears and one monster of a sub, the D6SUB. Toting a 38cm driver and providing 400w of output, it's not exactly shy: the sheer force it imparts is jaw-dropping. Dial up a potent action movie and you'll be thrilled by the sheer weight of the biggest explosions.

The balance across the front is blisteringly powerful, too, when required, but the sound doesn't harden up with volume or dynamics - the Jamo retains the richness of tone and fullness of balance that commonly characterises the very best THX kit, while dialogue is both wonderfully clear and tonally 'full'.

The D6SUR dipoles, meanwhile, wrap you in sound impressively - they're not the best we've heard, but they're far from being the worst.

Complaints? Well, stereo sound suffers from slow, muddy bass and a lack of precision to the image, but that's because THX speakers are designed to function as part of a 'front three' in home cinema. So if movies are your thing, the D6PTX has to go straight on your audition list.

AT A GLANCE...

SUBWOOFER NO	BIWIRE NO
CENTRE SIZE 29x60x15cm	POWER HANDLING 180 WATTS