

Epson EH-TW3600

Home theatre projector

Epson's EH-TW3600 is a home theatre projector; a bit of a rarity in today's world of large and inexpensive high-definition TVs.

Last time I was up close and personal with an Epson projector, I was mounting it to the ceiling of a custom-built home theatre. Not, sadly, my own. Technology has come a long way since then, and I thought it was time to see what a modern home theatre projector can do.

The first thing you need to know about the TW3600? Epson's model runs at 1920 x 1080 pixels for full high definition. This is perfect for playback, whether you view Blu-ray discs or high-definition YouTube clips. you can even surf the web at splendidly high resolution. And all of this can go straight on your wall, without a huge TV dominating your lounge, rumpus or even bedroom.

You can opt to project your image onto a fixed or roll-down screen designed for the purpose, or just point it straight at a (preferably white) wall. I chose the latter; a screen will give you better colour quality, but adds expense and complexity to an otherwise very simple setup.

Even on my plain white-ish wall, colour accuracy was good and overall image quality was excellent. There are a range of colour profiles and manual adjustments available to get the best picture, including a 'dynamic contrast' mode that worked well, making sports footage from a dim day 'pop' nicely. The TW3600 isn't the brightest projector I've ever seen, but it doesn't require blackout curtains to

get a reasonable picture (your results may vary depending on the thickness of your curtains, design of your home and position of the sun).

The pixel response appears fast enough: I didn't notice any ghosting of moving subjects when watching sport or playing games.

If you're setting up in a small room, don't fear: the minimum throw distance of the TW3600 is short – just 87cm for a 30-inch screen (though at that size, there's little advantage in a projector). With just over two metres to work with, I was able to project a 70-inch screen. Three metres gets you a 100-inch screen, and five metres a wall-fillingly huge 167-inches.

If you've ever set up a projector before, it's likely you've had to deal with the keystone effect – the distortion you get when projecting from an upward or downward angle that turns your nice rectangular image into an awkward trapezoid. The most common solution is digital keystone correction, whereby the projector reshapes the projected image to compensate for tilt. However, that eats up valuable pixels and causes distortion – particularly noticeable when web browsing or playing games, when you've got text on screen.

Instead of keystone correction, the TW3600 offers a physical lens-shift mechanism that moves the lens within the projector body, offsetting the image up to 96% vertically and 47% horizontally without distortion. Need to project above the level of your coffee table, or below the level of your ceiling? No problem – just tilt the lens, not the whole projector.

If you're packed into a small room or have the projector mounted directly above your head, you'll appreciate that it's virtually noiseless at 22dB in 'whisper' mode, and 28dB in 'high brightness' mode. During testing I relied on my MacBook Pro for audio, and despite its limited volume capabilities I could hear everything clearly with no interference from the projector's fan. This despite the projector was sitting directly in front of me on the coffee table, just half a metre away.

Hooking up your laptop, media player or TV tuner is easy with dual HDMI 1.3 inputs, plus composite, component and VGA.

Overall, Epson's EH-TW3600 is exactly what a home theatre projector should be: high-def, straightforward and quiet. It just sits there, throwing a nice big image across the room and on to your wall.

Harley Ogier

AT A GLANCE

- Full 1080p high-definition
- Dual HDMI inputs
- Lens shift technology makes keystone correction unnecessary
- Exceptionally quiet

EPSON EH-TW3600

RRP incl GST: \$3,299 Contact: epson.co.nz

A more-than-capable home theatre projector: great if you don't want your living space dominated by a giant screen.

★★★★☆

WHISPER QUIET: Lots of hot air but little noise.

