

Sony VPL-VW100

Sony VPL-VW100 video projector.

\$14,999.

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If you were hanging around many home theatre forums in January there were only two words on everyone's lips: "Sony Ruby". Sony had just released their new SXRD machine projector the VPL-VW100, known as the "Ruby", and the excitement it generated was unlike any other projector release of recent years.

Here was Sony's new SXRD based projector offering a full 1080p (1920x1080) resolution at around

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\$25,000 below their flagship Qualia projector that ushered in the new SXRD technology to much acclaim. It offers the potential of being an overdue marriage between CRT-like images

and the convenience and light output of digital. The Ruby uses a Xenon lamp, new advanced iris and possibly the best on board scaling yet offered on any digital machine.

First up

First up I tried *David Gilmour Live*. I hadn't seen this DVD in a while and I knew there was stage lighting and close up scenes that would challenge the ruby to deliver. Other "test discs" followed including the Sony Blu-Ray demo disc, *Rush R30*, *The Incredibles*, *The Matrix*, and *Star Trek 6*.

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discs looked new and more engaging than I thought was possible, while the new looked like DVD on steroids. The VW100 retrieves and displays information unlike any other projector I have seen!

The VW100 though is not the perfect. The corners of the image were lighter than the centre. The convergence of the three SXRD panels was also not perfect creating colour fringing on some scenes and whites appeared to blow out masking detail.

Like any good audio amplifier, you know a projector is working well when it gets "out of the way" and lets the film breathe in an organic and natural way. The VW100 has

depth of field and detail that is captivating and thrilling. Every whisker on David Gilmour's aging face was captured so clearly the image bordered on high definition. But there is still a sense of sterility that contrasts digital projectors from CRT.

A bit of noise

Another issue is fan noise. While it's low at a claimed 22dB, the fan is positioned so closely to the lamp that it 'rings' as air hits it creating an annoying high-end whine.

But most disappointing of all was the black level. At a claimed 15,000:1 contrast ratio viewers might expect near CRT level black. It does convey adequate black on suits and shoes, guitar bodies

and car tyres with ample shadow detail of fine suit threads and shoe laces, but CRT black-out (such as Nemo deep sea scene) is still a distant goal – the screen remains lit even if it's midnight on a moonless sky.

Much to be excited about

But there is also much to be excited about; The VW100 might be the first digital projector to keep owners happy over many years and several generations. The use of non-organic compounds in the SXRD panels should make for longer panel life and it'd be a hard-nosed home theatre fan who wasn't comfortable with the general image the VW100



produces in the long-term.

So for the most part the VW100 excelled. Was it the best digital image I have seen? No question. The detail, depth of field, colour rendition image stability and frankly, pure fun factor from the Ruby had me thinking this was the best outright home theatre experience I had ever enjoyed. The Blu-Ray demonstration disc was a genuine jaw-dropping experience – providing the elusive "window-on-reality" look that really showed the VW100 at its full resolution best. —Max Christoffersen

