

Sony DAR-RH1000 home cinema system

Sony has put a steep price tag on this all-in-one home cinema system, but have some serious omissions been left off the spec sheet?

by David Smith published on 26 January 2006

Sony has put a steep price tag on this all-in-one home cinema system, but is there are some serious omissions on the spec sheet? First the good news, though. This is a very attractively designed system, built around an HDD/DVD recorder with a 160GB hard disk. This offers enough capacity for up to 269 hours of programming. You can also record on to recordable DVDs, with DVD+R, +RW, -R and -RW discs acceptable. Dual-layered DVD+R discs can also be used, boosting recording capacity. The deck offers component video outputs for progressive scan signals, but it does not have the latest HDMI outputs, which provide a cleaner picture. You also have to manage without DV inputs, so camcorder enthusiasts will need to look elsewhere to transfer their recordings to DVD at the best possible quality. The sound system is a sub/sat package. It is neat and compact, but the satellite speakers look a little under-sized, especially when you look at the quoted power output of 120W per channel. The subwoofer is a big fellow and will do the grunt work via its 160mm drive unit. The key to such a system is its ability to work as a single entity. In this respect this Sony offering is a bit of a disappointment. The central unit is superb. Recordings are excellent in the top-quality settings, with broadcasts captured in their original glory in 1- and 1.5-hour modes. Most people will record on to the hard disk first, then edit out unwanted scenes or adverts. The editing interface is fine, but it results in rather clunky edit points - playback pauses when it meets a point where material has been deleted. In fact, it is more effective to simply pause the recording while it is in progress - this results in far smoother edits. The picture on pre-recorded



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DVDs is also excellent via the progressive scan feed, and still highly impressive in RGB Scart mode. It's therefore a shame to report that the sound system cannot measure up to this performance. The soundstage is effective only at modest volumes. It deteriorates noticeably when you crank the volume up, and that's disappointing on a system at this price.

VERDICT

The average sound system lets the team down, making this nothing more than an average system. The HDD/DVD recorder section deserves far better, as it offers excellent pictures on playback and recordings.

At a glance

What is it?

HDD/DVD recorder home cinema system

Good

Excellent picture; attractive design

Bad

Average sound system; no HDMI output

Verdict

Price £900

Our score

7/10

Your score

?/10