

<http://www.pocket-lint.com/review/3375/panasonic-sc-bt100-home-cinema>

## Panasonic SC-BT100 home cinema system

### Blu-ray without the bother

by Danny Phillips published on 18 August 2008

Blu-ray pioneer Panasonic scoops another world's first with the SC-BT100, currently the only Blu-ray system on the market with Profile 1.1 support. That means it'll play the picture-in-picture commentaries found on certain Blu-ray discs (such as Resident Evil: Extinction).

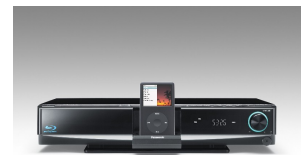
The beauty of buying a Blu-ray system like this, as opposed to seeking out a player, receiver and speakers separately, is that you don't have to worry about compatibility with the latest audio formats or matching up HDMI types - everything you need is in the box.

Well almost - Panasonic has only made the SC-BT100 a 3.1-channel system as standard, which means you need to add optional wireless rear speakers (SB-HS100A) to make up a 5.1 or 7.1 channel system (the norm for Blu-ray discs) which bumps the price up to a hefty £1000.

That said, you do get a lot for your money elsewhere. The system blasts out a healthy 1000W of audio power and decodes lossless Dolby True HD and DTS HD Master Audio soundtracks, plus Dolby Digital Plus, DTS HD, Dolby Digital and DTS.

If you don't fancy forking out for the extra speakers, then Dolby Virtual Speaker will create a pseudo surround soundstage. Conversely, with a 5.1 speaker system you can use Dolby Pro Logic II or DTS Neo:6 to turn two channel sources into multichannel surround.

On the video side, the main unit offers full 1080p output at 24 frames per second, with picture processing handled by Panasonic's UniPhier chip, which enhances colour, detail and motion and cleans up unwanted artefacts. The system will also upscale DVDs to high-def resolution, so



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there's no need to replace your entire movie collection just yet.

Aesthetically the system is a triumph. The main unit sports a delightful all-black finish injected with a few lights and buttons, while the black speakers (which feature cones made of bamboo) and subwoofer are quietly classy.

Connections are plentiful, but the most remarkable are the built-in iPod dock and SD card slot under a flap on the front panel, the latter allowing you to play back JPEG and AVCHD files. The system also plays DivX and MP3 from DVDs and CDs.

Rear sockets include an HDMI v1.3 output with Viera Link (CEC) and Deep Colour support, Component, S-video and Composite outputs, plus optical digital audio input for connecting a Sky box.

Like most Panasonic products, the SC-BT100 is incredibly easy to use. Colour-coded cables make installation a breeze, while the remote has a really intuitive feel - its canny layout and clear labelling leaves you in no doubt about which buttons to press. The onscreen menus are attractive, well-structured and responsive, and in action the unit refuses to stumble over tricky Java menus, making light work of Spider-Man 3.

Accessing the Profile 1.1 features couldn't be simpler - there are specific buttons on the remote that allow you to turn the secondary picture and audio on and off independently of each other, both of which work smoothly with the PIP commentary on Resident Evil: Extinction.

Hooked up to a 40in Toshiba LCD, the quality of the Panasonic's 1080/24p picture is phenomenal. There's a level of clarity and vibrancy that only a few high-end Blu-ray players can beat, delivering detail with pin-point accuracy and drenching the screen in pure, vivid colours. Movement is also generally smooth and dark scenes are

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## At a glance

### What is it?

Blu-ray home cinema system

### Good

Picture quality, features, looks, ease of use, Profile 1.1

### Bad

Sound quality, expensive, rear speakers are extra

### Verdict

The SC-BT100 offers amazing pictures, generous features and Profile 1.1 is a real bonus, but disappointing sound quality and the prohibitive price let the side down

**Price** 700 (for 3.1 configuration)

**Our score**

**7/10**

**Your score**

**?/10**

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competently handled.

Upscaled DVD pictures are also of the highest order, ramping up the resolution with the sort of artefact-free transparency you'd expect from an experienced video practitioner like Panasonic.

Sadly the unit's sound quality doesn't live up to its pictures. There's plenty of power, which makes energetic action scenes sound satisfyingly loud and aggressive, and soundstage is well orchestrated, but the treble sounds too harsh. It's a criticism that's also been levelled at recent Panasonic standalone amps and sadly the same is true here.

## **VERDICT**

The SC-BT100 offers amazing picture performance, a healthy set of features and unsurpassed ease-of-use, plus its Profile 1.1 capabilities put it streets ahead of other BD systems on the market. But in our opinion not putting surround speakers in the box (as the Samsung HT-BD2 does) makes the system seem overpriced.

Our disappointment is compounded by the flawed sound quality, which ultimately stops this system from earning our wholehearted recommendation.