

SXRD for the masses

John Archer auditions a Sony projector aimed at the mid-market



The VW40 shares the design flair of its high-end brethren

With its £2,300 VPL-VW40, Sony hopes to bring its highly-rated SXRD projector tech (a derivation of LCoS) to the mid-market. The VW40 certainly shows no immediate signs of cost-cutting; it boasts essentially the same 'stretched diamond' chassis with centrally-positioned lens as other SXRD models. Connectivity is up to scratch too, with twin HDMI 1.3 inputs, a PC port, RS-232 jack and a 12V trigger output for controlling a screen. However, the claimed 15,000:1 contrast ratio is less than half that of Sony's VW60 SXRD model, and is only achievable via a dynamic iris system that reduces brightness during dark scenes.

Setup is made easy thanks to a host of tools, including vertical image shifting, keystone correction, and zoom and focus via the remote.

The VW40's pictures are great, but there are caveats.

Fine detail levels outperform the price tag, as evidenced by the showboating levels of skin, clothing and background textures in *Sweeney Todd* (Blu-ray). HD pictures are almost noiseless, with no sign of

any technology-inspired problems along the lines of DLP's rainbow effect. What's more, Sony's Bravia Engine processor upscales standard-definition sources with aplomb.

The near-constant darkness of *Sweeney Todd* eventually shows the VW40 capable of likeable black levels. Why 'eventually'? Because it takes considerable tinkering with the 'out-of-the-box' iris, contrast, lamp and brightness settings to remove a grey pall that hangs over dark areas. In fact, I had to knock back the image's brightness so much to make black levels convincing that **images were robbed of sparkle and almost unwatchable should ambient light stray into the viewing room.**

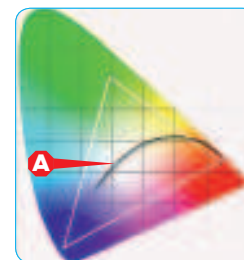
Colours, too, are a tad washed out.

Whether you go for Sony's VPL-VW40 is, then, largely a matter of taste: is the extreme detailing and lack of technology-related artefacts more appealing to you than the richer colours and more rewarding brightness/contrast combinations available elsewhere? Audition and decide ●

→ Specifications

HD Ready: yes Full HD with 1080p24
Progressive scan: yes NTSC and PAL formats both work
Scart: no nothing doing
Component video: yes one input
HDMI/DVI: yes two HDMI's
PC input: yes VGA input
Resolution: 1920 x 1080
Brightness (claimed): 900 Lumens max
Contrast ratio (claimed): 15000:1
Dimensions: 395(w) x 173.5(h) x 472(d)mm
Weight: 11kg
Also featuring: SXRD technology; Bravia Engine processing; 22dB fan noise; 2000-hour lamp life

→ Tech Labs



Initial colour temperature is high at 8,117K (**Point A**), but manual calibration delivers a near perfect 6,521K. Note the connections are on one side, making it hard to wire up tidily

Before calibration

Colour temperature: 8,117K
RGB: 84/103/119 **Luminance:** 324fL
Contrast ratio: 277:1

After calibration

Colour temperature: 6,521K (custom)
RGB: 100/100/100 **Luminance:** 237.3fL
Contrast ratio: 310:1

AV/CV

Product:
 A Full HD SXRD projector with twin HDMI's and an unusually low price

Position:
 This is Sony's entry-level SXRD projector

Peers:
 InFocus IN81
 JVC DLA-HD1



HCC VERDICT

Sony VPL-VW40
 £2,300 Approx

Price check: www.techradar.com/411705

Highs: Fine detailing; nice design; good connectivity
Lows: Slightly anaemic colours; black levels only good with the brightness set low

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5