

Buyer's checklist

* **Is my TV up to scratch?** If your CRT is still soldiering on, Blu-ray is a waste of money. Likewise, anything smaller than 32in or that you sit closer than a couple of metres to, and you won't get the best Blu-ray experience.

* **Is my audio system up to scratch?** If you're after the cinema experience and relying on your TV's sound output, you'll miss out on the multichannel, uncompressed audio richness that Blu-ray can offer.

* **Connections matter.** Most players don't come with HDMI cables, so you may need to buy some. Anything less than HDMI and you may as well be sticking with DVD in terms of visual quality.

* **Networking matters.** BD-Live content is pretty thin, but if you want it, or the networking and firmware features of some players, you'll need a cabled connection (or Wi-Fi network) to enable it.

SONY PLAYSTATION 3

PRICE \$499 / CONTACT SONY / PHONE 1300 137 669 / WEB www.playstation.com.au

The PS3 has undeniably been the building block for all Blu-ray players in terms of market acceptance, but how good is the actual unit? In our testing, it's very good indeed for the price you pay for it. The load time with our test disc, *Spider-Man 3*, was very speedy, beaten only by the super-swift Samsung players. Obviously, it's also a games machine, but it offers

media streaming features well beyond anything else in this roundup, in addition to embedded links to ABC's iView service. Visual acuity was quite good, but not great compared to the super-crisp images that the Sony BDPS760 or Pioneer BDP-LX52 produced. Our one problem here is that unless you like controlling your Blu-ray playback with a game

controller, you'll have to cough up an extra \$40 or so for the dedicated Blu-ray remote control.

PC User says: **Good Blu-ray playback and lots of extended features.**



85%

KOGAN BLU-RAY PLAYER BD 2.0

PRICE \$229 / CONTACT KOGAN / PHONE (03) 8677 2272 / WEB www.kogan.com.au

Kogan's mantra of price competition above all else usually brings with it all sorts of compromises, but in the case of the company's Blu-ray player, they're minor quibbles against what is otherwise a very good package. The player has a number of striking features, the most prominent of which is that it's the only player in our roundup to offer region-free playback, meaning you can buy discs from the US and play

them without issues. It's a bit tricky to implement, however, since you have to input a complex code every time you need to change regions, and the player doesn't recognise changes in between power cycles. The image quality was good, but not great, on par with the PS3 for a much lesser asking

price. If you travel or want to buy cheaper or US-only Blu-ray discs, this is an excellent choice; even if

you don't, it's a very good option. **PC User says:** **A good region-free player.**



80%

PIONEER BDP-LX52

PRICE \$999 / CONTACT PIONEER / PHONE 1800 988 268 / WEB www.pioneer.com.au

The Pioneer BDP-LX52 brings with it the single highest price point of any of the players in our roundup and at that kind of price, it's got to work extra hard to impress. Thankfully, unlike the cheaper BDP-120, this doesn't include loading discs at a snail's pace, with the BDP-LX52 sitting in the middle of the group of tested players. Its interface is friendly and will at first run a setup routine to optimise playback quality,

which is a nice step. Where the Pioneer BDP-LX52 earns its money, however, is in its visual quality, as it sat on the top tier of players along with the Sony BDPS760. Images were crisp, faults in the source material were all but imperceptible and colours were vibrant in our test setup. **PC User says:** **An excellent player if your wallet can handle it.**



80%

STARTUP SPEEDS COMPARED

Model	Time (in seconds) to start menu on Spider-Man 3
Kogan Blu-ray Player BD 2.0	(54)
LG BD390	(44)
Panasonic DMP-BD60	(67)
Pioneer BDP-120	(94)
Pioneer BDP-LX52	(65)
Samsung BD-P1600	(41)
Samsung BD-P3600	(41)
Sony BDPS760	(65)
Sony PlayStation 3	(49)
Toshiba BDX2000	(79)