



## TVs/DISPLAYS



# BAUMANN MEYER

## Symmetry Slim SL55AC100 LED TV

resolution, and is LED Edge-Lit for good black levels and low power consumption. It has an eight-layer anti-reflective coating. The company rates the brightness of the panel at 450cd/sq metre and its native contrast ratio at 6000:1.

The cables all connect to the range of inputs at the right-hand side of the back of the TV. These are all inset, with more than half actually concealed under a removable metal plate. All the sockets run parallel to the panel, so there are no chunky cables interfering with the close fit of the TV to a wall.

It has four HDMI (version 1.3) sockets, one set of component video inputs and one composite video, plus a D-SUB15 analogue computer socket. Two sets of stereo RCA sockets are provided for audio, plus one 3.5mm socket associated with the computer video input.

There are also a composite video, stereo analogue audio, coaxial digital audio, optical digital audio and 3.5mm headphone outputs. An RJ45 socket allows system integration.

The TV has both analogue and digital TV tuners built in. The latter supports MPEG4 — in other words, whatever happens in the future. The TV is not 3D-compatible, nor does it support the Audio Return Channel provided in the HDMI 1.4 spec.

Video processing is provided by a new 10-bit engine from the company, which it calls QIA (for Quantum Interpolation Algorithm). This

**T**he Baumann-Meyer SL55AC100 continues the company's advance into the real premium category of TVs. It reeks of style and offers some up-to-date performance enhancements. Indeed, it is explicitly aimed at taking on the German makers, at a price some 30 per cent below that typical for them.

### Equipment

The price is a little premium too, at \$6999. And the TV looks like much of that price has been lavished on build quality, with not the slightest bit of plastic in sight. What this very large 140cm (55 inch) TV presents is a thin brushed aluminium band across the top, only a centimetre or so wide, with another, somewhat taller, band stretching across the bottom. When the TV is switched off, all that is between the two is an almost featureless sheet of black glass, except for the simple brand name.

The aluminium — somewhat more workmanlike in these areas, is also used near the edges of the back, while the whole rear panel is a sturdy metal plate (steel we guess), all held together with screws.

The TV measures 1330mm wide, 820mm tall and 40mm deep, and weighs 35 kilograms. It actually looks rather thinner, thanks in part to the large size of the screen, but also the way the edges are only 7mm thick for a centimetre or more, beyond which the case tapers out to the full thickness.

We were also supplied the desktop stand for the unit (you can choose either this or a wall mount — either will cost you an extra \$299). The desktop stand was very attractive, with a thick sheet of glass constituting the base (with silicon feet rests underneath, and a circular silvery grey column showing underneath the TV). The LCD panel of course offers full high-definition



implements 100 (or 120) hertz processing, including frame interpolation.

## Performance

Setting up the TV requires you to manually start the digital and analogue TV station scans. Few Australians will feel the need to bother with the latter these days, but just in case, we had a look. It worked reasonably well, looking far better than analogue TV has any right to look on a huge LCD TV. The TV doesn't have an aspect ratio key, requiring the use of eight keystrokes just to get to the right menu item to change it. But once we'd set the aspect, it remained in place for that input unless explicitly changed.

Baumann Meyer says that the TV consumes less than two watts in standby mode (about half a watt according to my power meter) and up to 195 watts when operating, and it specifies the TV as having a five-star energy rating and an annual standardised consumption of 548kWh per year. Our own measurements suggested an easy six stars, nearly 6.5 (the star rating is rounded down to the nearest 0.5 and we scored it 6.46) for an annual consumption of 488kWh. In everyday use, the power meter tended to sit around 131 watts with external HDMI inputs, varying only a couple of watts around that, and bumped up by another five watts using the digital TV tuner. That was with the default backlight setting of 55 and the Auto Backlight set to the default of 'Off'.



## “When the TV is switched off, all that is between the two is an almost featureless sheet of black glass...”

The latter setting is required by the testing protocol, but we felt that leaving it off was the best setting. In a dark room, it ramped down the brightness too aggressively for our taste (halving power consumption), and left the picture looking not just dull, but low in contrast as though being viewed through a translucent sheet.

This is in stark, ahem, contrast to the TV with its default settings (or with those settings tweaked a little using a set-up disc).

The picture quality was excellent when fed with a high quality progressive signal. It also looked excellent on the majority of broadcast TV, although on rare occasions some deinterlacing artefacts were apparent.

The reason for this became clear when we ran our test DVDs and Blu-ray discs into the TV at native resolution. It seems that the TV always uses a high-quality motion adaptive technique for progressive scan conversion. It did not seem to attempt to identify natively progressive sections of the video to weave together, so there were instances with 576i/50 and 1080i/50 film-sourced material with unnecessary artefacts: jittery near-horizontals, moire patterns on finely spaced lines and grids, and the breakup of fine detail.

But the TV also incorporates a 'Judder' control feature. This generates intermediate frames for a 100Hz picture (it also works for Blu-ray, running the picture at 120Hz). Aside from quite effectively smoothing motion, this also tended to suppress some of the fine detail damage. Nonetheless, for really high quality DVD and Blu-ray viewing, we'd suggest a high quality player with excellent progressive scan output.

The colour was excellent and the mapping of brightness levels from the signal to the screen was equally good, providing beautifully smooth colour graduations. The black levels were very good... for an LCD TV that does not have a backlight that responds actively to the picture content. In normal viewing the black levels were excellent. In a darkened room, without making any picture adjustments, there was a slight mottling of the black levels in almost completely black scenes. However we found that if we turned down the backlight from its default of 55 (on Standard) to about 35, even in our dark room the results were very satisfying. We saved this setting in the 'Custom' preset to make it readily accessible.

The default 'Judder' setting of 'Low' did a nice job of smoothing motion without any visible artefacts. Higher levels made things even smoother, but with an evident heat haze effect. We also turned the default 'Sharpness' setting of 75 down to 30 to produce a much smoother picture.

The sound from the TV's own speakers is surprisingly good given that they fire downwards through small round holes. But of course the main purpose would be for watching the news, not proper movie viewing. Baumann Meyer describes them as 'full range' and they are each provided with ten watts of power.

The TV sticks with the input selection paradigm that the company has been using for several years, and while not especially pretty, it is more efficient than most. Just hit the 'Input List' key on the remote, and then the digit next to the input that you are after. There is also a direct 'DTV' key and a 'HDMI' key that cycles through those inputs (plus the computer one).

The TV doesn't have USB or network connectivity, but it has a feature that is becoming increasingly rare: a proper Picture-in-Picture function (or side-by-side if you prefer). This allows you to have one (but not both analogue and digital) TV tuner and HDMI or AV, or one HDMI and a TV tuner or AV.

## Conclusion

The Baumann Meyer Symmetry Slim SL55AC100 LED-LCD TV is a fine television that looks extremely classy and produces a very good picture on a massive screen. You won't get some of the gadgets available on some TVs, but you get all you need for fine TV viewing — hence its recent highly commended award from *Sound+Image*. ■

### Baumann Meyer Symmetry Slim SL55AC100 LED TV

Price: \$6999

Warranty: Three years

Panel: 'Super Slim LED Edge Lit Panel', 10 Bit, 100Hz, Full HD

Processing: Baumann Meyer Proprietary 10-bit 100Hz Full HD Processor with Quantum Interpolation Algorithm Technology (QIA)

Tuners: 1 MPEG4 digital, 1 analogue

IR Control: Full discrete hex code operation

IR flash: IR input flasher with or without carrier

RS232 Control: Bidirectional

Calibration: ISF calibration ready

- Very good picture quality and black levels
- Very attractive styling
- Easy station and input navigation

- Less than optimal deinterlacing of 576i/50 and 1080i/50

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