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**JBL ES900 Cinepack** ★★★★★ [Explain star rating](#)

<b>RRP</b>	\$3496.00
<b>Review Date</b>	Tuesday, 13th of May, 2008
<b>What's Hot</b>	Incredible sound quality, ability to adjust subwoofer
<b>What's Not</b>	Audiophile price tag
<b>The Final Word</b>	JBL's ES900 Cinepack offers amazing quality and depth of sound, even if it's at a price not many can afford.

**Review** Specifications

# JBL ES900 Cinepack

Stunning sound quality from an impressive 5.1 speaker package

[Campbell Simpson](#) 13/05/2008 12:30:00

The ES900 Cinepack, which joins the ES800 and ES1000 in JBL's new line of home theatre surround sound packages, delivers great sound. Its only flaw is the audiophile-grade price.

The ES900 Cinepack, comprising two floorstanding speakers, two bookshelf speakers, a centre speaker and a subwoofer, is a very large and imposing setup. Delivered in five separate boxes, it's not light — weighing almost 83 kilograms in total. This weight is justified though: the units have an impressive build quality and are finished in a black ash veneer. JBL has not bundled a surround sound receiver or amplifier with the system. This might be a failing for a cheaper unit, but the market for the ES900 Cinepack is audio enthusiasts who already have dedicated

amplifiers and sources.

The package's focus is understandably on the two floor-standing speakers, which serve the front left and right stereo channels. (They are available separately as JBL's ES90 speakers.) They are quadruple driver speakers: they have individual elements dedicated to different ranges (bass, treble, and mid-range). This allows for a better and more unified balance of sounds. The centre speaker and the two surround bookshelf speakers play a secondary role. The centre speaker is more than capable for movies, with a focus on mid-range, which means it is well suited to vocals and movie dialogue. The surround speakers are equally capable and do a good job of adding separation to positional audio.

The five speakers of the system are complemented by JBL's ES150 subwoofer. It's a 10in driver. This may seem small by home theatre standards, but it has a massive amount of power. It runs off its own built-in amplifier, which allows for the volume and frequency cut-off of the subwoofer to be set manually. We found this useful when setting the ES900 Cinepack up: it allows you to adjust the subwoofer to the room size. The subwoofer can handle incredibly loud volumes without any evident distortion. Bass was consistently punchy at all volumes, with a reasonably quick decay.

Even without the subwoofer turned on, the front speakers do a fantastic job for stereo music. Bass is well covered by the dual 8in woofers. The high-quality tweeters used in the floorstanders give a beautifully sharp edge to high-range notes, without sounding harsh or fatiguing.

The system is wonderfully balanced. In either stereo or surround mode there is no obvious focus on any part of the aural spectrum; the speakers perform excellently for any musical style.

It is when used for surround sound that the ES900 Cinepack really excels. We connected the speakers to a dedicated Onkyo receiver and DVD player and threw on *The Matrix*. During the well-known lobby scene, we were blown away by the sound quality. Individual gunshots, footsteps and other noises could be clearly distinguished without any confusion; positional audio was exceptionally good. We then switched to a Samsung [BD-P1000](#) Blu-ray player and *The Fifth Element*. The speakers performed flawlessly, with a deep, rich musical sound accentuated by crisp, clean highs.

Whether you're listening to stereo music or surround sound movies, the ES900 Cinepack from JBL is a package that is exceptionally capable. If you're not put off by the price, this system is a great choice.