



"If you can't wait any longer for a Blu-ray player, this is the one to buy"
Page 55

DVD & HD PLAYERS

High-definition video is here in the form of Blu-ray and HD DVD players, so is it still worth buying a standard DVD player, or should you invest in one of the new formats?

Marantz DV7001



WE GAVE AN Award to Marantz's £1500 DV9600 last year, and a more guarded four stars to its £600 DV7600 stable-mate. Some technical and cosmetic surgery later and this DV7001 rises from the '7600's ashes. And how...

It's immediately more imposing and impressive, boasting extremely sturdy build quality and a logical remote. The DV7001 uses 192kHz/24-bit audio DACs on all channels, and has a 216 MHz/12-bit video DAC.

And when it does its thing, the Marantz makes good on all that promise. Upscaling standard DVD to 1080p, the DV7001 delivers a vivid, detailed picture with smooth edges and minimal noise. It handles contrasts well, revealing detail in bright whites or inky blacks (even if they appear in the same frame) and doggedly tracks motion.

Music and movie sound excels

Skin tones are stable and natural, textures of all kinds revealed in their entirety. Only the slightest hint of over-enthusiasm in red/orange tones stops the Marantz from notching up a

FOR

Muscular build and expansive spec; lovely images and exceptional sound

AGAINST

We could nitpick about colour accuracy, but frankly that'd be petty

VERDICT

Reports of DVD's demise have been greatly exaggerated – this is real quality from Marantz



flawless scorecard, but it's a minor flaw and one we can live with.

Where the Marantz DV7001 truly excels is with audio. With movies, it offers plenty of low-end grunt and grip, poised and natural voices, and a crisply attacking top end. It creates a large soundstage, where effects both big and small are well defined.

"If we had £600 to spend on a universal movie and music player, we'd buy this one"

What's more, don't forget that this is a universal player, able to handle both DVD-Audio and Super Audio CD discs too. If you want to hear what those high-resolution audio formats are capable of, this is as good a player as any to try them out on. Just run three pairs of stereo interconnects from the six-channel

output on the player into the six-channel input on your amp or receiver, and away you go.

The result? Multichannel music discs – and only to a slightly lesser extent standard stereo CDs – flourish on this player. We've criticised many DVD players in the past for poor music replay, but not this one, which obviously benefits from Marantz's hi-fi heritage.

Whichever way you look at it, the Marantz makes a compelling case for itself. It's a great DVD player, handles stereo and multichannel music with ease and is built like a brick. If we had £600 to spend on a universal disc player today, this is the one we'd buy.

SPECIFICATION

Disc formats DVD-V/A, DVD+/-R/RW, CD, SACD, DIVX, MP3 **video out** HDMI, component, S-Video, RGB **Scart audio out** electrical/optical/6 analogue **dimensions (hwd)** 13x44x33cm **weight** 7kg

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» BEST BUYS

TOP DVD & HD PLAYERS

With the arrival of Blu-ray and HD DVD players, you now have the choice of investing in one of the high-definition video formats or standard DVD

BEST FOR VALUE

TOSHIBA SD-370E

★★★★★

Wafer-thin and with a slick design, you'd be forgiven for thinking this merited a three-figure price. Design props are somewhat undermined by an ugly grey remote, but hey, that money's got to be saved somewhere, and the rest of the specs are spot-on. For just £60 you can upscale DVDs to 720p and 1080i, allowing you to get more from your HD-ready flatscreen without having to come down on one side of the HD-DVD/Blu-ray fence. You may not confuse the results with 'real' high definition material, but these natural, detailed and dextrous pictures are still pretty impressive.



BEST FOR PICTURE

DENON DVD-1940

★★★★★

This attractive and solid performer is the replacement for the Denon DVD-1930, which won last year's DVD Product of the Year award. As you'd expect from a Denon, build quality is excellent, and this time around there's an eco-standby button which uses only 1w, and a detachable mains lead for easy upgrading. Some work's been done under the bonnet, too, and picture quality now beats its older sibling into a cocked hat – though we can't help but feel sonics have suffered a little. However, given such clean, vivid, detailed images, you may feel this is a fair price to pay.



BEST ALL-ROUNDER

MARANTZ DV7001

★★★★★

Starting where the DV7600 left off, this is a sturdily impressive piece of kit. It feels solid and imposing and works like a dream, tracking motion well to deliver a vivid, detailed picture with excellent contrast. Even skin tones, notoriously difficult to render, are stable and natural, with only a hint of over-enthusiasm in red and orange tones to mar its otherwise perfect scorecard. Sonically it really excels, with natural voices, lots of bottom end and a crisply attacking top end. What's more, it can play DVD-Audio and Super Audio CDs, making it perfect for audiophiles.



BEST FOR HIGH-DEFINITION

PIONEER BDP-LX70

★★★★★

Finally, a Blu-ray player we're happy to recommend. The LX70 can output HD content at 24fps, as well as 1080p content, something Pioneer likes to call 'HD Digital Film Direct'. With its DMLA-compatible Ethernet port it can also double as a home network machine, so you can stream music, movies and data direct from your PC. In picture terms it's impressive, too: sharp, detailed and colourful with strong black levels. What's more the sound is exceptional; shame, then, that it doesn't support HDMI 1.3 – though a new version, out soon, will do exactly that.



Try them with these...

LCD TV



PANASONIC TX-32LXD700

★★★★★

If you value quality over size and price, this is the best 32in LCD we've seen. It delivers deep blacks to rival plasmas.

FULL REVIEW page 22

AV RECEIVER



ONKYO TX-SR875

★★★★★

A superb performer with music and movies, and has the added benefit of support for and decoding of Dolby Digital Plus, Dolby TrueHD and DTS HD.

FULL REVIEW page 90

SURROUND SPEAKERS



DALI LKON 6

★★★★★

So good it was Product of the Year 2006 in the surround speaker category.

FULL REVIEW page 107