

PANASONIC DVD-S75 DVD-Audio player £170

# Must-buy marvel

The DVD-S75 is almost impossible to fault. Features, performance, looks, compatibility – all are top-notch. Danny Phillips salutes this superb machine



Most DVD player manufacturers struggle to ensure compatibility with the ever-increasing formats. One company taking this in its stride is Panasonic, whose decks consistently pass the playback challenge.

Take the range-topping DVD-S75. Its list of compatible formats is impressive, boasting multichannel DVD-Audio and DVD-RAM playback, along with Windows Media Audio (WMA), MP3 and JPEG files.

It's also the first deck to support HighMAT (High Performance Media Access Technology), co-developed by Microsoft and Panasonic to bridge the gap between PC and AV when handling WMA, WMV, MP3, JPEG and MPEG4 files. The only format conspicuous by its absence is Super Audio CD, which is not supported by Panasonic.

Look in the dictionary under 'sexy' and you could find the DVD-S75 in all its silver and black glory, next to a description of its mirrored display panel, minimal buttonry and see-through disc tray. Connectivity is as comprehensive as its compatibility. There's component video output for plasma screens and projectors, an RGB Scart,



The remote is simplicity itself

six-channel analogue audio outs (required for multichannel DVD-Audio playback) plus optical and electrical digital audio outputs.

The setup menu is clear and since the deck sports Dolby Digital, DTS and DVD-A decoders, it includes a speaker setup screen for six-channel output – letting you adjust level, size and delay.

Onscreen presentation during playback is faultless and the masterful menus leave nothing untouched – even down to the position and brightness of subtitles! The intuitive remote control makes them a joy to navigate. Pressing Display toggles through a series of different menu bars at the top of the screen, providing access to the player's myriad features.

For pictures, a series of presets make a significant difference to image quality. There are two menus' worth of user-defined settings – see *Specifications* for the rundown. Audio-wise, Advanced Surround is the obligatory sound-widening effect, while Double Re-master artificially adds higher sonic frequencies to 48kHz audio for a more natural sound – though its effect is negligible.

When viewing DVD-RAM discs, pressing Direct Navigator brings up a list of recordings and their details. It's a no-frills display (text but no thumbnails) which is easy to use.

The DVD-S75 has the slickest JPEG viewer we've seen on a DVD deck while menus show thumbnails and details of all pictures. Files can be viewed as a slideshow and each can be rotated. The WMA and MP3 menu presentation is also superb.

## PERFORMANCE

DVD playback is absolutely stunning. Movies look remarkably clean and sharp, with not one MPEG artefact in sight. Because these pictures are so naturally unblemished, it's hard to see what improvements the bevy of noise reduction modes actually make.

Detail remains intense even among light-starved surroundings, and the tremendous contrast level gives images a film-like, three-dimensional quality. Bright lights and peak whites sizzle from the screen, while colours are richly saturated. If any aspect of the picture isn't to your taste, chances are it can be remedied by the User picture settings.

The DVD-S75 backs up its visual prowess with impressive sound capabilities for the price. DVD-A playback is smooth as velvet and as detailed as the format demands. Software from the likes of *Missy Elliott* and a variety of Japanese jazz recordings sound heavenly, while CD sound is almost as enjoyable – that also goes for MP3 and WMA playback. Dolby Digital/DTS soundtracks are electrifying through the six-channel analogue outputs – lively, fast-paced and punchy.

The features list and price is enough to convince most people that the DVD-S75 is an essential purchase. But the flawless operation, great looks and superb performance puts this beyond a shadow of a doubt. We think you should buy it now ■

## Specifications

### FEATURES

DVD/DVD-Audio/DVD-R/DVD-RW (Video and VR modes)/DVD+R/DVD+RW/DVD-RAM/CD/CDR/CDRW/VCD/SVCD/MP3/WMA/JPEG playback; HighMAT compatible; Dolby Digital and DTS decoders; NTSC prog scan output with video and film modes; NTSC/PAL 60 output; Quick Replay; Advanced Surround (for speakers and headphones); Double Re-master; Dialogue Enhancer; Attenuator; Normal, Soft, Fine, Cinema 1 & 2 and User presets; six-stage zoom: 16:9, 4:3, European Vista (1.66:1), American Vista (1.85:1), Cinemascope 1 (2.35:1), Cinemascope 2 (2.55:1); Depth Enhancer; 3D-NR, block NR; mosquito NR; contrast, brightness, sharpness, colour and gamma adjustment; sleep timer; bitrate meter; speaker setup

### SOCKETS

Component video output; 1 RGB Scart; S-video output; composite video output; six-channel analogue audio output; stereo audio output; optical and electrical digital audio output

### TEST DATA

Video jitter: 11ns (below average)  
Signal-to-noise ratio: -68.3dB (average)  
Chroma AM/PM: -72.1dB/-66.7dB (excellent/very good)  
Chroma crosstalk: -46.1dB (below average)  
Frequency response (S-video) at 5MHz: -4.70dB (excellent)  
composite video at 5.8MHz: -4.59dB (very good)  
Audio jitter: 381.5ps (average)

### DIMENSIONS

430(w) x 52(h) x 303(d)mm

### CONTACT

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## Verdict

### WHAT'S GOOD

Picture; sound; features; ease of use

### WHAT'S BAD

No SACD

### OVERALL

Superb value, with astonishing features and sparkling performance

PICTURE . . . . . ★★★★★  
SOUND . . . . . ★★★★★  
FEATURES . . . . . ★★★★★  
EASE OF USE . . . . . ★★★★★  
VALUE . . . . . ★★★★★  
OVERALL . . . . . ★★★★★