

To be honest, you wouldn't go far wrong with any of these **DVD players**, but if you want the smoothest, most detailed box you can buy for under £150, there's a real bargain to be had...

Test Express

DVD PLAYERS £60-£150

Budget DVD's major players

Denon DVD-1740



£150

THIS IS DENON'S cheapest DVD player, but in the present company, £150 doesn't seem amazingly 'budget'. With that in mind, you're entitled to expect this product to be a reasonable step-up from the sub-£100 market.

Its headline specs pretty much match those of the cheaper players. HDMI is a given, of course, and this is one of two spinners here that upscales all the way to 1080p. Denon has eschewed the slim, lifestyle look in favour of a more serious-looking, chunky machine. From afar, it pulls it off nicely, but in the hand the unit is disarmingly light. In fact, we were worried we'd been sent a hollow prototype. Thankfully, this wasn't the case, and once powered up, the Denon excels.

It's all down to performance per pound

Detail is excellent, even in dark areas, and the colour palette is balanced and natural. Motion stability is very impressive, with the frequent scuffles in *The Departed* being reproduced admirably, making them easy to follow. There's a little noise on large areas of colour, but less so than on any of the other players here. Sound is also excellent, soundtracks being full, exciting and detailed, and even CD music sounds good.

The '1740 is undeniably the best player here, but it's not good-enough value to take this test. If CD replay is a priority, the Denon makes a case for itself, but as a DVD player, Samsung is too close for comfort.

FOR

Excellent colour, detail and motion stability; very good sound, even CDs

AGAINST

The extra ability doesn't justify the extra expense

VERDICT

More than double the price of the competition here, this had to be exceptional, and it's not quite that

Philips DVP5980



£70

A MONTH IS a long time in the world of home cinema. Long enough for a five-star product to be booted off its lofty perch by a new and superior rival. And so it has come to pass that the DVP5980, reviewed just last issue, has lost a star, thanks to the Samsung opposite.

This doesn't automatically mean the Philips is a bad player. It's not, and those who have already picked one up can remain very pleased with their purchase.

Upscales DVDs to Full HD-style 1080

For a start, this unit's specs belie the 'budget' tag more than any other here. It matches the Denon's 1080p upscaling, and chucks into the mix a USB input for playback of stored photos and music.

However, the most important element of any product is performance, and our wagering that the Philips would do 'as well as anything else out there at this price point' hasn't quite stood up in practice.

Detail levels are excellent – class-leading in fact – but you can't help but notice the slightly flushed colour palette, with the perfectly balanced Samsung and Denon emphasising this niggle. Also, though we were originally impressed with the Philips' handling of motion, it now looks a bit rough next to the best. The Philips simply can't hold on to sharp edges during tracking shots as well as others can. Sound is another matter, though, the Philips exhibiting very good timing and dynamics for the price.

Overall, this is still a strong product, but Samsung has set a new benchmark; one that the Philips can't match.

FOR

Fantastic levels of detail; great spec, including 1080p upscaling; very good sound

AGAINST

Motion causes sharp edges to break-up; slightly flushed skintones

VERDICT

It's still a great DVD player, just not quite the champion we thought it was

