

Panasonic DMR-ES15 dvd player

Panasonic has built a fine reputation in the DVD recorder market, with a range of excellent models so can the latest

by David Smith published on 7 April 2006

Panasonic has built a fine reputation in the DVD recorder market, with a range of excellent models. Decks that combine a DVD recorder with a hard disk recorder are more versatile, but the basic recorder on test here is more likely to appeal to those looking for a straightforward upgrade from their old VCR.



The strong points of this deck are apparent as soon as you scan the spec sheet. It will record on to every type of DVD out there, including the dual-layer variants of DVD-R and DVD+R discs.

This boosts recording capacity to an impressive maximum of more than 14 hours. The catch is that you do have to "close" the first layer and before you can access the second, so you can't simply programme 14 hours' worth of recordings and go away for the week.

Other plus points are the two-channel DVD-Audio playback and the useful editing options on DVD-RAM discs.

The achilles heel of the DNR-ES15 is not so easy to spot. It does not offer an RGB Scart input.

Yes, this is an affordable deck, but there is absolutely no excuse for this omission. It means that if you have a digibox you will not be able to record your programmes in the best possible picture quality, and that's what DVD recording should be all about.

There is a DV input on the front panel for camcorder users, and at the rear component video outputs will supply a progressive scan signal to a compatible TV, so it's not all bad news.

Recordings on this Panasonic model are very good. If you can get an S-video connection

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between your source and the recorder the captured image will be almost as good as RGB.

If you have to make do with composite signals (many digiboxes do not offer S-video outputs) the picture will be markedly inferior. That being said, even at the 6 and 8 hour recording modes the picture remains superior to VHS.

A digital tuner would have been handy with the big switch-off coming over the horizon, but it's that RGB Scart omission that prevents a whole-hearted endorsement of what is otherwise a very capable recorder.

VERDICT

There is an awful lot to like about this DVD recorder, and if RGB recordings aren't an issue for you it should go straight on to your shortlist.

At a glance

What is it?

DVD recorder

Good

14 hours recording time; Progressive scan output

Bad

No RGB input; no Freeview tuner

Verdict

There is an awful lot to like about this DVD recorder

Price £180

Our score

8/10

Your score

?/10