

<http://www.pocket-lint.com/review/3111/Samsung-TruDirect-DVD-recorder-PC>

Samsung TruDirect DVD recorder

Burn DVDs direct from your camcorder

by Chris Hall published on 2 May 2008

The Samsung TruDirect is an external optical drive that you add to your existing PC setup, the aim being to change your PC into a DVD studio.

The drive sits in a modern white casing wearing a grey belt and is unsurprisingly almost identical in size to a standard desktop bay drive. In the box you get everything you need to get started, which mostly consists of software: you get Samsung's own TruDirect software, as well as Nero Express 7, InCD 5, Showtime and LightScribe.

Supported media includes all the common DVD options, +R, +R DL, +RW, -R, -R DL, -RW, -RAM, -ROM as well as CDs, with write speeds up to 20x and read up to 48x. It also features LightScribe so you can customise the back of your discs too.

Your main options are to record live video, photo files or video files. To get the most of the TruDirect setup you want to be able to hook up a camcorder and record live or streaming video - great for if you want to record something like a speech that you can then give to someone else to take away. This will depend on your connections, FireWire, USB2, Composite or video capture card, so if you have hooked up a set top box or VHS player you could also take this option; it recognised our attached webcam too.

Camcorders cover a range of standards and media types - tapes, discs, HDD - and the TruDirect aims to make it easy for conversion from an unfriendly format into a more common DVD which you'll get more use out of. Certainly, if you can plug in your tape camcorder and record straight to DVD, then this is a real bonus. Equally, we managed to get the TruDirect to directly record from a file on an HDD camcorder, which means you only have to move files once, from the original to "archive media" without having to go via the PC hard drive.



...cont.

One of the nice features is the ability to append files to an existing RW disc, so you don't have to start with a new disc and this fits in well with recording streaming video as you can compile volumes, perhaps a daily video diary, or record daily team sales meetings.

One of the selling points of the drive is the fact that there is a "one button" option on the front of the drive. This launches the TruDirect software so you can jump straight in to constructing your DVD. That said, there are not many options in the software that you have to choose, so this isn't exactly a time-saving move, unless you regularly do the same thing, in which case it might be a benefit.

TruDirect also offers you basic menu customisation. However, compared to the supplied Nero, the offering doesn't really stand up, suffering in quality, especially if you want to watch it back on a larger screen.

In burning test discs, we found that TruDirect was a mixed bag of experiences, especially when playing back content on our stand-alone player, where we experienced several crashes of our main Samsung DVD player. We also found that DVDs had no sound when played on that player, but were fine on the computer, with no obvious option for changing this. However, this problem seemed specific to the Samsung DVD player, as a comparison on a Cello player revealed no problems, so there are some compatibility issues.

We tried to burn some short video files that had been shot at top settings on an HD camcorder via TruDirect and found that they again had the sound problem and came out like vintage animation as the frame rate was shot to pieces. However, on other occasions we recorded the same files again and found no problems at all. Using Nero, and our built-in DVD writer, this didn't happen. As far as supported files goes, as TruDirect works around Windows OS you need to

At a glance

What is it?

External DVD recorder

Good

One touch option, bundled Nero

Bad

Compatibility issues, software produces varied results, menu options are basic and look bad, manual

Verdict

Unfortunately the basic problems we experienced raise too many questions and bring the marks down

Price £69.99

Our score

6/10

Your score

?/10

...cont.

have all the codecs for playback in Windows Media Player to allow you to record them to DVD.

You'll also find that the manual has been brutally translated, littered with grammatical quirks, for example "After completion of recording, TruDirect drive discharge a media". It actually contains very little useful information.

VERDICT

TruDirect is perhaps a niche product that will appeal to those who don't have a DVD writer, but do have a PC that is well enough connected to support video streaming from an external source and don't want to record to their hard drive. If you want to move camcorder footage straight to DVD, then is certainly is a way to do it, but test before you commit to an hour of transfer, just to be sure.

Otherwise, if you are just looking to burn DVD discs from assorted files, then there are plenty of other options to do so. Unfortunately the basic problems we experienced raise too many questions and bring the marks down.