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Philips BDP7300 Blu-ray player

Philips goes Blu

by Danny Phillips published on 5 August 2009

Philips hasn't really made an impact in the high-def player market so far but the BDP7300 could put the Dutch manufacturer on the Blu-ray map. It's a fully-fledged Profile 2.0 affair, which puts BD-Live downloads at your disposal (the quality of which is getting better all the time, by the way) and offers a decent range of other features for a competitive price.

After lifting the BDP7300 from the box, the excellent build quality is immediately apparent - it's weighty and solidly bolted together, which bodes well for performance. It's also one of the best-looking Blu-ray players you're likely to see, not quite up there with Samsung's latest, but a devilishly good-looking piece of kit all the same. The flat fascia and minimal clutter give it a modern yet classy air.

On the rear panel is a healthy range of connections, the highlight being a set of 5.1-channel analogue outputs. You might find these useful if your AV receiver lacks HDMI, as you can enjoy the benefits of Dolby True HD and DTS HD Master Audio soundtracks (both of which this deck can decode internally). Yes 7.1 outputs would have been better, but for £250 we're not complaining. Also included is an Ethernet port for BD-Live and firmware updates (wot no Wi-Fi?) plus an HDMI v1.3 port that delivers 1080/24p video and HD audio bitstreams.

On the front panel is a USB port that'll provide hours of fun for anyone with a sizeable digital media library - plug in a USB flash drive loaded with content and away you go. The superb graphic-led main menu makes it easy to find your content and the player accepts DivX, MP3, WMA and JPEG.

Weirdly, it even supports high-def WMV files, which is a rare talent among Blu-ray players. However, with our test files it would only play the



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video and not the audio, and with some SD WMV files only the audio could be heard. A firmware fix might solve the issue but it's a bit of a let down, particularly as there's no DivX HD or MKV support to make up for it.

But the Philips does boast two other stand-out features - the first is 1GB of built-in memory, which means you don't need a USB stick to store BD-Live downloads; the other is fast disc loading, which gets even the trickiest Blu-ray discs up and running in around 30 seconds.

In operation the deck is peppered with lovely touches like large playback icons that appear in the middle of the screen then fade away, and a slick, funky setup menu. The remote also sports a comprehensive array of buttons without feeling cluttered, and helpfully emphasises the most-used keys.

The deck's Blu-ray pictures are imbued with deep, vibrant colours, smooth gradation and no noise to speak of, while detail is as crisp and focused as you'd expect. Diagonal lines are rendered with no unsightly stepping and it keeps judder to a minimum at 24p. Excellent contrast keeps detail clear and visible in dark scenes, putting this player almost on a par with the likes of Panasonic and Pioneer in performance terms.

Upscaled DVD playback is also impressive, benefiting from strong colour and detail presentation, but we've seen Blu-ray decks that do it better. As for its sound quality, internally decoded HD audio tracks are detailed and slickly orchestrated, but for the best results pass the raw bitstream to your AV receiver.

VERDICT

It might lack the extensive features and design pizzazz of the Samsung BD-P3600 or the pristine pictures of the Panasonic DMP-BD60, but the BDP7300 it still a solid Blu-ray proposition. The quick disc loading, built-in memory and surprisingly sturdy build quality are welcome at

At a glance

What is it?

Blu-ray player

Good

Quick disc loading, built-in memory, picture and build quality

Bad

No Wi-Fi, unreliable WMV playback

Verdict

Not quite talented enough to topple Panasonic or Samsung, but pleasing build quality and convenient features make this worth considering

Price £250

Our score

8/10

Your score

?/10

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this price, and help to gloss over the temperamental WMV playback and lack of Wi-Fi web connectivity.