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Mustek PL408 portable DVD player

by Dan Leonard published on 4 July 2004

The portable DVD player is finding a market in the UK and that means cheaper prices as more manufacturers try and vie for our money. Mustek, a name usually associated with cheap scanners, is the latest manufacturer from the Far East to try and get a piece of the action, but with so many players on the market has the PL408 got enough to stand out from the crowd? From the outset you know that the PL408 is going to be perfect for car travel and with predictive scan and anti-shock protection it's also good for public transport, even on the bumpiest buses or trains. Weighing in at 850g, the sleek chrome unit is weighed down by the frankly enormous clip-on battery. Don't bank on it seeing you through that epic movie - with maximum battery life at 2.5hrs, that's the Lord of the Rings out of the question unless you skip some chapters. While the battery is a little bulky to say the least, it's quick to charge and by being external, the size of the unit is kept to a minimum. Bear in mind the player can run without the clip on battery from the mains or cigarette lighter socket for the in-car movie fan. Overall, the build quality is on the happier side of average. While the full size Mustek players take on the appearance of tanks, this rigidity transfers to a sturdy, durable portable player here. It's a nice shape, solid enough to sit well on surfaces and comfortable on the lap too boot. The lap friendly size (212 x 29.8 x 155mm) is due in part to a widescreen 16:9 TFT panel. The 8.4in widescreen which is larger than the Shinco 7in is unfortunately let down by the image quality. It's a fine line on a budget player, but at the slightly higher price than some of its competitors (again the Shinco), viewing quality is all -important. Thankfully, the PL408 scores well in other areas. Sound is good, with the nice touch of dual headphone sockets, ideal for kids to share on those long journeys. The AV inputs for a camcorder and VCR are cleverly reversed via a slide switch, sending image and sound to a TV if you want to use this at home when not on the road and a credit card sized remote control is



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thrown in too so you don't have to keep reaching for the box every time you want to pause or change a setting. In terms of readability, this played all the VCD, CD-R and DVD-RWs we could throw at it. It displayed our JPEGs and has built-in Kodak software for viewing shots from CD.

VERDICT

Although slightly more expensive than the Shinco portable DVD reviewed last month, this is another great buy in the budget portable DVD market that sports a slightly larger screen for your extra £50. Let down slightly by the image quality and the huge clip on battery, this is nonetheless a sound buy. A few button presses will turn the PL408 into a multi-region player and the widescreen is a great touch. Shame the price couldn't be shaved a little to give the bottom-end budget players a tougher battle.

At a glance

What is it?

Budget portable DVD player

Good

Widescreen, durable, dual headphone sockets

Bad

Clip on battery is rather large, we've seen better image quality on rival models. Tough competition from the Shinco 7in, weighing in at under £200

Verdict

A good solid player marred only by a bulky clip-on battery

Price £254

Our score

8/10

Your score

?/10