

JVC DR-MX1SEK Combi

by Dan Leonard published on 10 May 2005

Combination DVD and VHS players may seem a little 1980s, but don't let the yuppie passion for questionable combination products dissuade you entirely. Sure, when one half claps out, you might be left wishing you had separate units, but find a well made combo and you're onto a good thing. Reasons to be cheerful; simplicity, space saving and one less remote control, to name but a few. Be wary though, the thought of turning your old original VHS to DVD, or storing rental copies to your hard drive and burning your own discs may ring up pound signs in your eyes, but not only is it illegal, it isn't possible with this kind of unit either. Including a hard drive (HDD) in any AV product seems to be a natural progression. While Sky+ is the obvious example, other devices benefit heavily from that onboard storage and the promise of editing, without a string of devices or a desktop computer. Sadly, DVD burners and VHS/DVD combo units seem unable to live up to customer expectations. Perhaps this is due in part to the piracy laws, but no doubt more to the abundance of cracking software available for computers and the appearance of affordable DVD -RW units for desktops, long before an affordable under TV solution hit the market. The good news is that the DR-MV1S makes non-copyrighted material easy to dub from DVD to VHS, or vice versa. Almost any non-encrypted material can be burnt to either format, as anyone with a CD or DVD writer can accomplish via his or her PC. The 160 GB HDD will store between 36 and 214 hours of footage. There are four different modes, ranging between 1.6 and 10 Mbps. The live memory and twin tuners make simultaneous recording and viewing possible across channels. While testing this unit, we ran some nice tape-to-tape recordings. Recording full length pieces from the DVD to VHS, or vice versa worked well too. The big downside is the usability outside dubbing full-length programs. There seems to be serious problem with the DVD authoring- each pause and change of VHS tape makes the DVD reset to the start of the disc, thus



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making a montage or compendium from VHS or DV cam is impossible, unless you connect another DVD or VHS into the JVC- thus rendering the combination pointless. This is a shame, as there are lots of measures taken to aid the dubbing process, from progressive scan, freezeless editing, x 32 high speed dubbing and playlist based dubbing. Dubbing is a 3 stage process; a Time Base Corrector removes any jitter from the incoming analogue signal. The Frame Synchroniser corrects and crossover or deviant frames and the finally the MANRS process that employs selective noise reduction and looks at the algorithms of the moving pixels. All terribly complicated, but automatic.

VERDICT

Yes, the DR-MV1S supports dual recording, so you can record two shows at the same time, (a big problem with the combo TV/VHS units of days gone by). Yes, the DVD burner records up to eight hours of footage. Unfortunately, there are a few gripes; first off, the size. This unit seems to weigh more than the average elephant and has a very deep footprint, including an awkward fan cover that protrudes from the rear. Overall, the finish is fine, a bold blue LED strip and clear display illuminate the front, although sadly the flip front covers all except for the screen, blocking access to the buttons. For such a large robust device, the VHS eject and the DVD tray is both clunky and slow to use. The button layout is a little confusing at first, with controls shared between the two devices, rather than a separate navigation for each. This is a forward thinking device, in terms of input and outputs, and that you can program TV recording to the HDD 12 months in advance. As the first unit of its kind from JVC, it's far from a disappointment, but overall, it lacks that certain something. If you probe the web, you may find some harrowing tales from owners. Let us hope they live long and prosper, proving themselves worthwhile rather than becoming just another paperweight.

At a glance

What is it?

HDD DVDRW and VHS Combo

Good

Long live VHS! Twin tuner, watch and record from different channels simultaneously

Bad

Large, and a little clunky. Problems with writing individual chapters to DVDRW

Verdict

This is a forward thinking device, in terms of input and outputs, but lacks that certain something

Price £289

Our score

7/10

Your score

?/10