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Mustek PL8A90 portable DVD player

At first glance the PL8A90 portable DVD player from Mustek sounds too good to be true

by Stuart Miles published on 16 November 2005

At first glance the PL8A90 portable DVD player from Mustek sounds too good to be true. The slim tablet-style portable DVD player with anti-shock protection has a 9 inch active matrix TFT LCD screen with aspect ratio 16:9 and plays DVD, DVD+/-R/RW, CD, CD-R/RW, (S)VCD, Kodak Picture CD and JPEG. The PL8A90 has built-in stereo speakers, 2 stereo headphone jacks and SD/MMC card reader for reading and displaying pictures from your digital camera or phone camera.



It also features digital coaxial output in Dolby Digital, TV connection via the AV output and a flexible power supply with its rechargeable battery, 12 volt car adapter and AC/DC power adapter. The device even comes with an IR remote control, bag and car mountable harness and is available for £219. But is it too good to be true?

To start with, the build quality of the PL8A90 is appalling. The casing and buttons have that cheap "knocking shop" feel to them and the stand on which you can support the player feels like it is going to break at any minute it's that flimsy.

The screen might be large, but it is of a very poor quality, dulling colours and bleeding out edges - think video after its been played one too many times. The screen quality isn't shown in any greater light when it comes to viewing images via the players SD/MMC card slot. Our test images taken with a 5 megapixel camera looked very blurry and ropey on the screen and reminiscent of a 640x480 VGA mobile phone shot rather than from a £300 digital camera.

Get past the poor build quality and even poorer picture quality and the DVD player makes such a noise when you are watching DVDs that you have

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to over compensate by turning up the volume just to hear what was going on over the constant weering and humming.

But, wait that's not all, and like some rubbish infomercial, the PL8A90 has so much more to give. Mainly that the battery pack is almost a third of the size of the player and when connected that flimsy stand we mentioned isn't good enough to support the device standing up. Even worse than that is you can't charge it and use the DVD player at the same time.

Mustek, maybe realising this, has included a car charger and headrest pouch in the box so you can watch it while travelling. Although even this causes problems. When the pouch is on you can't access the disc bay to change the DVD out, nor can you read what any of the buttons do.

VERDICT

While the box promises so much, the unit doesn't actually deliver effectively on any of them.

If this is to entertain the kids in the back of the car then you might just about get away with the ropey quality and the poor build - hey its not like they are going to complain and go and buy their own.

But if you are hoping to use this for yourself and actually care about picture quality and features then avoid this like the plague.

At a glance

What is it?

Tablet DVD player for the car

Good

Nothing unless you don't care about picture quality

Bad

Where do we begin? Build quality, picture quality, pretty much everything

Verdict

Unless you are buying this for your child who is unlikely to complain - this is one to avoid

Price £220

Our score

4/10

Your score

?/10