



DVD Recorders



£400 Does JVC's fine first entry into the DVD Recorder market mark the death of VHS?

JVC DR-M1

IN ADMITTING DEFEAT IN THE BATTLE TO keep its invention, the video cassette, alive, JVC has done the DVD Recorder market a big favour.

Where we do have a few gripes with the UK's first combined -RW and RAM recorder is its connections, which include a RGB enabled Scart and separate S-Video and stereo audio outputs. However, the second Scart at the back of the unit, which connects set-top boxes, cannot handle RGB sources – it will only accept composite or S-Video sources. An i.Link terminal on front panel allows digital dubbing from camcorders.

Its 'living memory playback' feature – watching a

recording while it's still being made – is unique to RAM compatible machines or those with hard drives (and some DVD-RW machines). Recordings can be made onto almost universally accepted DVD-R discs.

DVD-RW disks can be formatted in video-mode or VR-mode. The latter allows free editing of contents but the former is more widely compatible. That's made up for by satellite control (only with Sky digiboxes) and the great 'free rate' (FR) recording mode, which calculates time left on the disc in various recording modes. This means you can chop and change between bitrates on one (recordable or rewritable) disc.

Picture quality in XP and SP mode recordings is clear, while the DR-M1's progressive scan playback works with recordings and PAL software.

With a such a low street price, JVC's DR-M1 is only a hard drive and a RGB input away from perfection.



What's good

- ✘ Satellite control
- ✘ Prog scan

What's bad

- ✘ No RGB input
- ✘ Satellite control won't work with Freeview or Sky+



£300 Great features and a familiar VCR look and make this perfect for the newly converted

Panasonic DMR-E55

IT MAY BE AT THE LOW END OF PANASONIC'S DIGA range, but what the DMR-E55 lacks (hard drive, DV input) it makes up for in great picture, sound and a myriad of recording functions.

That's largely down to its compatibility with DVD-RAM and DVD-R formats – but be aware that DVD-RW discs cannot be used for recording. Its four recording modes, XP, SP, LP and EP, range from one to eight hrs of recording time. Picture quality on XP mode is outstanding – as it is with pre-recorded DVDs – while the more flexible SP mode is excellent. Other modes are still better quality than VCR recordings.

Timer recordings can be made manually or with

VideoPlus, and there is also a PDC facility. The DVD-RAM format offers extensive editing and is perfect for daily recording and deleting. It also enables 'chasing playback', allowing you to watch the start of a recording while it continues to record, as well as 'time slip', which means the last 30 secs of live TV can be replayed – a boon for sports fans.

Playback functions include Direct Navigator, which displays full-motion thumbnails of all recordings on a disc, while Playback NR reduces picture noise and Virtual Surround Sound mode does what it says – with only two speakers.

Expansive connectivity comprises component

video output for PAL and NSTC progressive scan, RGB Scart input and output, S-video support, an optical digital audio out and front panel AV inputs for connecting a camcorder. Missing features, like a memory card slot, i.Link digital video connection and hard drive can be found on other Panasonic models.



What's good

- ✘ Versatility of DVD-RAM recording
- ✘ Attractive design

What's bad

- ✘ DVD-RW recordings would have been useful
- ✘ No DV input



DVD Recorders

MAKE MODEL	CYBERHOME CHDVR750	GOODMANS GDVD300R	HUMAX DRP-560	JVC DR-M1	LG DR4810	LOEWE CENTROS	MICO ESPEJO R311
SPECIFICATIONS							
Price	£250	£200	£315	£400	£300	£450	£200
Recording formats	DVD+R, DVD+RW	DVD+R, DVD+RW	DVD+R, DVD+RW	DVD-R, DVD-RW, DVD-RAM	DVD-R, DVD-RW	DVD+R+RW, DVD-R+RW	DVD+R, DVD+RW
RGB recording	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
DVD-Audio playback	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Video CD/Super Video CD	YES/NO	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/NO	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES
CD-R/CD-RW playback	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES
MP3/JPEG playback	YES/NO	YES/YES	NO/NO	YES/YES	YES/NO	YES/YES	YES/NO
Tel	+49 21 0238000	0870 8730080	020 8547 4240	0870 3305000	0870 6075544	0800 0276465	0852 2951 4538
Web	www.cyberhome-europe.de	www.goodmans.co.uk	www.humaxdigital.com	www.jvc.co.uk	www.lge.co.uk	www.loewe.de	www.micoelectric.com
FEATURES							
VideoPlus/PDC	YES/YES	YES/NO	YES/YES	YES/YES	NO/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES
GuidePlus	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Variable bit-rate recording	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
Non-linear editing	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO
Playlist editing	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO
Timer	6-event	8-event	6-event	8-event/one month	7-event	YES	6-event
No of recording modes	5	6	5	5	3	4	5
Trick-play functions	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Zoom	YES	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO
Progressive scan playback	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO
CONNECTIONS							
RGB Scart in/out	NO/YES	NO/YES	NO/YES	NO/YES	NO/YES	NO/YES	NO/YES
Component video out	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO
DVI or HDMI out	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES/YES
S-video in/out	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES
Composite video in/out	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES
Stereo audio out	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Optical digital audio out	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO
Electrical digital audio out	NO	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES
i.Link in/out	NO/NO	NO	YES/NO	YES/NO	NO	YES	NO/NO
Photo card slot	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO
VERDICT							
Ease of Use	★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★
Features	★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★
Looks	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Picture	★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★
Sound	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Value	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★	★★★
OVERALL	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
WE SAY:	This retro looking model is at the lower end of the market and comes with what you would expect in the way of features. A budget Philips clone with limited editing options, it's nevertheless a good performer when it comes to sound, while recordings made in SP mode are as good as the original broadcast. Better, though, to spend a bit more and get an RGB input and more flexible editing capability.	It may be a budget DVD recorder but this smart model is the equal of many more expensive units. DVD playback picture quality is more than adequate while sound too is very reliable. Recordings made in SP mode are near-DVD quality, although sounds quality is fairly weak. All in all a great value recorder for the price, just don't expect miracles.	By no means a bad DVD recorder at Humax's first attempt. Quite easy to use and fine for recording analogue terrestrial TV but, sadly, not digital. Its eye-catching design, complemented by a stylishly thin remote control, is let down by a sluggish menu system and, above all, the price. A good unit but other recorders offer just as much for the money. A sizeable drop in price may be needed if Humax is to keep up with its rivals.	Fantastic audio (although there's no manual control of recording levels) and very good picture quality, combined with an attractive street price, equals a good value unit. Slight pulling noticeable with captions but overall it can't be faulted as a DVD player. The combination of DVD-R and DVD-RAM gives you freedom while editing. All it needs is an RGB input.	It might be available at a decent price, but there's a good reason. Despite attractive casing this is a fairly mediocre recorder that suffers from limited editing options and a poor array of inputs. Fewer recording modes than most models and a bland picture make this a limited, albeit easy to use, deck that is worth avoiding; better units are available, and much cheaper.	A disappointing case of style over substance. Lacking even rear S-video input let alone RGB, there's no proper way to get good recordings from digital TV, which is daft, and there's no progressive scan playback. Dual format recording is handy but apart from the excellent editing features it's quite tricky to use.	There are too many cut corners here for the budget price to overcome. It's too easy to mistakenly record over a partially recorded disc, the remote lacks any class and DVD+R recordings can't easily be edited. We do like the audio output, which is good on both surround sound sources and CDs, and the picture quality is excellent. What a shame it has no RGB input for recording digital TV sources.

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BEST BUY

MAKE MODEL	MUSTEK R100B	PANASONIC DMR-E55	PANASONIC DMR-E65	PHILIPS DVD R80	PHILIPS DVD R610	PHILIPS DVD R615	SONY RDR-GX300
SPECIFICATIONS							
Price	£200	£300	£400	£500	£200	£230	£400
Recording formats	DVD+R, DVD+RW	DVD-RAM, DVD-R	DVD-RAM, DVD-R	DVD+R, DVD+RW	DVD+R, DVD+RW	DVD+R, DVD+RW	DVD+R, +RW, -R, -RW
RGB recording	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
DVD-Audio playback	NO	YES (2-channel)	YES (2-channel)	NO	NO	NO	NO
Video CD/Super Video CD	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/NO	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES
CD-R/CD-RW playback	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES
MP3/JPEG playback	YES/YES	YES/NO	YES/YES	NO/NO	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/NO
Tel	0870 0132017	08705 357 357	08705 357 357	0870 9009070	0870 9009070	0870 9009070	08705 111999
Web	www.mustek.de	www.panasonic.co.uk	www.panasonic.co.uk	www.philips.co.uk	www.philips.co.uk	www.philips.co.uk	www.sony.co.uk
FEATURES							
VideoPlus/PDC	NO/NO	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES
GuidePlus	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO
Variable bit-rate recording	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES
Non-linear editing	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES
Playlist editing	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES
Timer	8-event	16 event/one month	16 event/one month	15-event/one month	6-event/one month	6-event/one month	YES
No of recording modes	5	5	5	7	7	8	6
Trick-play functions	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES
Zoom	YES	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO
Progressive scan playback	YES	YES	YES		YES	YES	YES
CONNECTIONS							
RGB Scart in/out	NO/YES	YES	YES	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES
Component video out	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
DVI or HDMI out	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
S-video in/out	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES	NO/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES
Composite video in/out	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES
Stereo audio out	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Optical digital audio out	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Electrical digital audio out	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO	YES
i.Link in/out	NO/NO	NO/NO	YES/NO	YES/NO	NO	YES/NO	NO
Photo card slot	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
VERDICT							
Ease of Use	★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★			
Features	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★			
Looks	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★			
Picture	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★			
Sound	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★			
Value	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★			
OVERALL	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★			
WE SAY:	Despite the long specs, this deck is very average when it comes to basics like picture and sound. It may be multiregional and have lots of inputs, but the lack of VideoPlus or similar programme guide and the fact that the progressive scan function copes only with NTSC marks this out as a dubious foreign import clearly not aimed at UK consumers.	This elegant deck may not be the cheapest DVD recorder out there, but but it's one of the best, thanks to the combination of DVD-RAM flexibility and DVD-R compatibility. The RGB input on the recorder is vital for anyone with digital TV (Freeview, Sky or cable). A great all-purpose recorder for day-to-day use, and reasonably priced.	Like the cheaper DMR-E55 this elegant deck is not the most affordable but its recording and playback performance is so damn good it makes it impossible to seriously fault (though DV camcorder enthusiasts should note that there is no DV output for dubbing edited footage back to a camcorder). Overall, a great machine if you can justify the price.	Colourful and detail-laden pictures on recordings made in optimum modes makes this a special deck. Others can compete there, but not over the inclusion by Philips of GuidePlus, a seriously special addition. Editing may be limited and the menu navigation may be a little slow but it's so feature-packed we don't have any major gripes.	Not yet rated	Not yet rated	Not yet rated



DVD Recorders

MAKE MODEL	SONY RDR-GXD500	SONY RDR-GX700	THOMSON DTH 8005	TOSHIBA DR-1	YAMADA DVR-8000	HITACHI DV-RX7000
SPECIFICATIONS						
Price	£500	£500	£400	£400	£200	£279
Recording formats	DVD+R/+RW, DVD-R/-RW	DVD+R/+RW, DVD-R/-RW	DVD+R, DVD+RW	DVD-R/-RW, DVD-RAM	DVD+R, DVD+RW	DVD-RAM, DVD-R, DVD-RW
RGB recording	YES	YES	YES	NO		YES
DVD-Audio playback	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Video CD/Super Video CD	YES/YES	YES/YES	NO/NO	YES/NO	YES/YES	YES/YES
CD-R/CD-RW playback	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES
MP3/JPEG playback	YES/NO	YES/NO	YES/YES		YES/NO	YES/YES
Tel	08705 111999	08705 111999	01732 520920	0870 4424424	0870 9063304	01628 643000
Web	www.sony.co.uk	www.sony.co.uk	www.thomson-europe.com	www.toshiba.co.uk	www.umax.co.uk	www.hitachidigital.com/media.com
FEATURES						
VideoPlus/PDC	NO/YES	YES/YES	NO/YES	YES/	NO/NO	YES
GuidePlus	SOMETHING SIMILAR	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Variable bit-rate recording	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO
Non-linear editing	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Playlist editing	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES
Timer	YES	YES	16-event		YES	YES
No of recording modes	6	6	6	3	4	4
Trick-play functions	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO
Zoom	NO	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO
Progressive scan playback	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO
	We say: The only UK DVD recorder with a built-in Freeview digital terrestrial TV tuner	We say: Similar to the GXD500 but with no Freeview tuner - has DV camcorder inputs instead	We say: The high price tag does not include the picture-enhancing progressive scan function	We say: Use of DVD-RAM opens-up editing possibilities, but watch cross-compatibility with other DVD players	We say: Navigation display is long-winded and of all the recording modes, only HQ is of any notable quality	We say: Not yet reviewed
CONNECTIONS						
RGB Scart in/out	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/	YES/	YES
Component video out	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO
DVI or HDMI out	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
S-video in/out	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES
Composite video in/out	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES	YES/YES
Stereo audio out	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Optical digital audio out	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Electrical digital audio out	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
i.Link in/out	NO/NO	YES/NO	NO/NO	YES/NO	NO	YES/NO
Photo card slot	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
	We say: Sports a built-in Freeview digital terrestrial TV tuner	We say: A pity the i.Link is an input only as you can't output edited DV footage to a camcorder	We say: Included on Thomson's earlier media recorders, USB memory card readers for MP3s or digital pictures have been left out from this model	We say: Neither of the two Scart inputs will accept an RGB video signal	We say: Lacks a DV input but generally well-endowed with connections	We say: Not yet reviewed
VERDICT						
Ease of Use			★★★★	★★★★	★★	
Features			★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	
Looks			★★★	★★★	★★★	
Picture			★★★	★★★★	★★★	
Sound			★★★	★★★	★★★	
Value			★★	★★★★	★★★★	
	We say: Not yet reviewed	We say: Not yet reviewed	We say: With a very muted playback of commercial DVDs, this is an average deck, although, even coupled with its underwhelming audio, it would serve a basic surround sound system adequately. Lack of digibox control and memory card or DV-input for camcorders ensures a conclusion that this is a no-frills unit aimed squarely at the gadget-unconscious	We say: With hard disk recorders DVD still relatively expensive, this deck makes a good substitute. Thanks to DVD-RAM compatibility, its editing features are many and extras like 'pause live TV' are possible. DVD playback is good and much better than most entry level decks	We say: It looks chunky and the remote is clunky, but it boasts excellent connectivity if not editing options, being DVD+RW compatible. The one-hour HQ recording mode is great, so this deck is for people who need to archive and is not the best for daily use	We say: Not yet reviewed
OVERALL			★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	