

— audition —

equipment review

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Elite DVD9200 DVD-Video Player



In the past three or so years, the price of DVD players has dropped to almost disposable levels. It's now more economical to replace some DVD players than have them fixed. This throw-away pricing is good for your bank balance but, as with most things in life, you tend to get what you pay for.

Many manufacturing businesses that weren't in the DVD player market, jumped on the bandwagon, eagerly switching production to the machines to meet with the ever-increasing consumer demand. The DVD-Video format crossed boundaries too, as a consumer electronics format as well as becoming a peripheral device on the vast majority of modern personal computers. The computer industry is notorious for price drops as it's such a volatile and forever-changing technology-led market and some of this has undoubtedly rubbed off on the latest breed of very affordable domestic DVD-Video players.

They have become ludicrously inexpensive. I'm still waiting to see one advertised for under \$70, but I won't have to wait too long. What this sort of money buys is a very basic DVD-Video player and one with a brand name you've never heard of before, or even no brand name badge at all. And to be perfectly frank, if you get 12 months use out of such a machine, then you've done well. Anything more than that is simply a bonus.

The number of these 'no-name' branded machines is plentiful. At this festive time of year, there seems to be more than ever adorning the front of junk mail and piled high in electrical retailers, plus stores that don't normally sell such goods. Everyone, it seems, wants a piece of the inexpensive DVD player action. One such company, is the Elite Technology Group, a company that was established in 1993 and has been involved in various aspects of digital video technology and lately specialising in computer and automated security

**Just how much
should you be
paying for a
DVD-Video
player?**

By Nic Tatham

systems. The chances are that while you're waiting for the 7.55am to Sydney's Town Hall railway station, the video streaming system on the station's platform was supplied and installed by Elite.

What's all this got to do with watching DVDs at home, you may well ask? Well, for some years now, the company has also been supplying DVD-Video players and other domestic AV equipment. The player in question here is the Elite DVD9200. It, like 99.9% of DVD machines these days, is a slimline design and finished in silver. Construction quality hardly sets any new standards of workmanship, but is still pretty good and a lot better than some I've come across for the same sort of money. Internally, the DVD9200 uses a DVD-ROM drive sourced, as are all the parts, from China. This is a generic DVD-Video player, badged and imported by Elite and is typical of the sort of affordable designs coming out of the prodigious Chinese factories.

Sticking on the inside for now, the design layout's good and the player has a reasonably substantial power supply. All of the video and audio processing is contained on a main single PCB. There's all the video and audio connections you've come to expect of a

DVD-Video player, regardless of price, although the DVD9200 does contain onboard Dolby Digital and DTS 5.1 decoding. It's becoming a rarer feature these days at this price level and if you still own a Pro Logic AV receiver with a discrete 5.1 channel input, it's easily the most affordable upgrade route into 5.1 surround audio.

The remaining audio connections comprise single coaxial and optical digital outputs, while on the video side there's the usual suspects - namely Composite, S-Video and Component Video connections. Quality-wise, it's best to use the latter, although the player's factory default setting has it switched off, which means you have to hook it up first by either Composite or S-Video in order to enable the Component Video.

The supplied remote is also a generic handset and provides all controls in a reasonably well laid out fashion. It's then into the player's setup menu, again a typical and frequently used GUI. There's a lot more video control though compared with Chinese DVD players I've tested in the past. The settings include adjustable sharpness, brightness, contrast, gamma, hue, saturation and even luminescence delay. And if you're going to use the onboard 5.1 decoding, there's plenty of audio controls too. The audio setup allows you to choose large or small front, centre and rear speakers as well as selecting a subwoofer if connected. There's a built-in test tone and equaliser with numerous settings such as Rock, Pop, Live, Techno and Dance, if this is your sort of thing. Another take-it-or-leave-it feature, but one that adorns virtually every Chinese-made DVD player is the good old Karaoke functions. Still almost a way of life in Asia, it's a pastime that becoming more popular here thanks to TV programmes like *Australian Idol*, so who am I to question what you get up to in your living room?

One of the audio preferences lets you choose between DVD-Video and DVD-Audio formats, although this isn't marked anywhere else as a DVD-Audio player. Out of interest I loaded up a DVD-Audio disc to see what happened. If it played to the format's full extent, it would certainly make this the most affordable player of this type on the market. I set the priority to DVD-Audio in the setup menu and had partial success in playing back some titles. A

Vital Statistics

Dimensions:

430 x 48 x 261mm

Weight:

4kg

Price:

\$149

Distributor:

Elite Technology Pty Ltd
22-24 Bridge Street
Rydalmer, NSW 2116

Telephone:

(02) 8845 3021

Faxsimile:

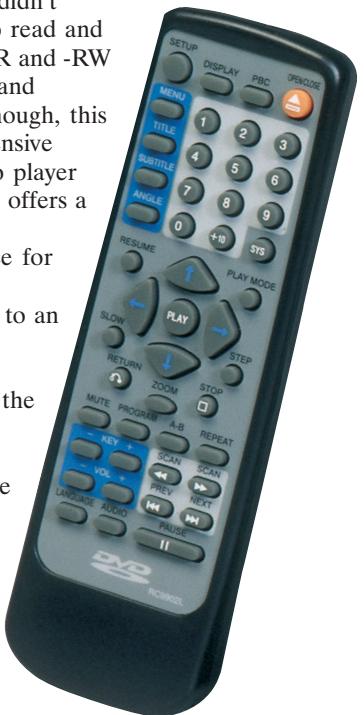
(02) 8845 3088

Website:www.elitetechnology.com.au

Warner demonstration disc started to play, but then did weird things and eventually the machine resorted to trying to find a nonexistent disc title menu. The Corrs *In Blue* fared worse, with a messy distorted image on screen and locking up the machine entirely. From this, all I can assume is that the player's GUI is the same as that used on some actual DVD-Audio compatible machines, which this one definitely is not.

What it does play is the usual gannet of formats, including multizone DVD-Video, music CDs, MP3 encoded discs, VCD and Super VCD, plus CD-R and CD-RW. It didn't manage to read and play DVD-R and -RW discs. First and foremost though, this is an inexpensive DVD-Video player and as such offers a fair bit of performance for the money.

Hooked up to an Onkyo TX-SR700 AV receiver via the Elite's onboard decoder, the audio quality of this machine is pretty good. With both



Technotalk

Product Type:

DVD-Video player

Disc Compatibility:

DVD-Video/CD/VCD/CD-R/(W)/

CD Audio/Super VCD/

Horizontal Video Resolution:

Over 500 lines

System Signal:

PAL/NTSC

DVD Frequency Response:

4-44,000Hz (96kHz)

4-22,000Hz (48kHz)

CD Frequency response:

4 - 20,000Hz

Dynamic Range:

>95dB

Total Harmonic Distortion:

0.0010%

Signal to Noise Ratio:

More than 95dB

Audio D/A Conversion:

96kHz/24-bit

Technotalk specifications and recommended retail prices are supplied by the manufacturer

“The Elite handles the dynamic rollercoaster well, riding the big highs of this action movie with impressive ability, especially considering how little it costs. It also does a fine job with less explosive moments and during the rarer quiet moments of the film, there’s a good degree of detail retrieval and the player is able to convincingly deliver ample levels of surround ambience and involvement.”

Dolby Digital and DTS 5.1 movie soundtracks there’s plenty of definition across the frequency range. The full, powerful bass thumps out those action movie explosions and a clarity in the midband and treble means you won’t miss a line of dialogue. One film that is packed with both is the latest Bond flick, *Die Another Day*.

The action’s relentless, visuals impressively over the top and of course James Bond delivers more than a few of his trademark one-liners. The Elite handles the dynamic rollercoaster well, riding the big highs of this action movie with impressive ability, especially considering how little it costs. It also does a fine job with less explosive moments and during the rarer quiet moments of the film, there’s a good degree of detail retrieval and the player is able to convincingly deliver ample levels of surround ambience and involvement.

What isn’t so impressive about this machine though is the image quality. Sure, on a more forgiving typical 68cm TV it’ll look good in the average living room. Hooked up to my Toshiba rear projection LCD though, the Elite’s image is a bit soft and lacks edge definition, especially compared to my usual Onkyo DVD player. Okay, so there’s a tremendous difference in price, although just \$50 more will get you a better looking DVD player than this.

All in all, there’s a lot of DVD player here for the money and this Elite machine is far better than some sub-\$200 bits of DVD gear I’ve come across. Given the state of the DVD player market and the price war that continues unabated, it’s got its work well and truly cut out in order to stand out from the seriously maddening DVD crowd. It’s a good buy nonetheless, especially if you’re looking at an affordable upgrade route from Pro Logic to Dolby Digital and DTS.



For non-stop action, few films offer as much DVD player testing demands as the latest Bond outing - *Die Another Day*. Costing just four times as much as the DVD itself, this Elite machine handles the onslaught well.

Ancillary Equipment: KEF Q Series AV loudspeakers, KEF PSW3000 Active subwoofer, Onkyo TX-SR700 AV receiver, Onkyo DX-SP800 universal DVD player, Toshiba 38D9UXA LCD rear projection TV

O P I N I O N

The ‘Opinion’ expressed here is that of the reviewer, summarised in the form of a 5-star rating system, and should be considered as an integral part of the full contents of this Audition Equipment Review. As such, each category should be judged on its own merits and not necessarily used as a comparison with other equipment reviews in this, or other editions of Audio & Video Lifestyle magazine.

- ★ Shocker
- ★★ Average
- ★★★ Good
- ★★★★ Excellent
- ★★★★★ Perfection

“The player in question here is the Elite DVD9200. It, like 99.9% of DVD machines these days, is a slimline design and finished in silver.”

Performance

- ★★★
- Build Quality**
- ★★★★½
- Compatibility**
- ★★★★★
- Value For Money**
- ★★★★★