

# audition

equipment review

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## Toshiba SD-2810 DVD-Video Player



**J**ust how low can they go? It's getting silly now - the lowest priced DVD player I've seen advertised cost just \$79.95. In their country of origin, these machines cost even less, so maybe there is room for the price of these already ridiculously cheap machines to go even lower.

I've said it time and time again - you get what you pay for with budget gear like this and if you've never heard of brands such as Panaha or Yamasonic, there's a good reason why not and you're better off giving them a wide berth. Many choose not too though, when for a few dollars more, you can avoid disappointment with a DVD player such as this.

As it does like all major brands, Toshiba regularly rotates its DVD players every 12-months or so and, just like the no-name brands, its DVD hardware is also becoming more and more affordable. That's where the similarities end though and rest assured, by spending the extra, you are

getting a far higher quality machine.

The new SD-2810 is the latest affordable Toshiba single disc DVD player and shares its predecessor's slim and shallow proportions. Physically, there's not a lot to this DVD player, as is the norm these days with slim is in. Construction is up to Toshiba's high standards though and there's a bit of reassuring weight to the SD-2810, despite the tiny size. There's very little plastic used and the unit feels and looks very sturdy with reassuring button presses and a smooth, quiet drawer action.

As for its specs, the SD-2810 has most things covered. The audio DACs decode up to 24-bit/192kHz and the Toshiba's list of playable media comprises DVD-Video, CD, Video CDs, CD-R(W), MP3 and DVD-R. The player also now handles a variety of image-based recordable media too.

All connection types are present and correct, namely one each of the Composite, S-Video and Component Video variety and the SD-2810 also has the usual audio connections in the form of coaxial and optical digital outputs

Why spend  
more than \$100  
on a DVD  
player? Here's  
one good  
reason why  
you should

By Nic Tatham

and a stereo analogue line-level output. Basic video and audio leads are supplied, but it's worth spending \$30 or so on a decentish set of Component Video leads which provide superior image quality.

Crunching the video data, the Toshiba uses a 10-bit/27MHz video DAC and the SD-2810 will handle both PAL and NTSC material.

Another aspect to the image capabilities of this machine is a Digital Image Viewer, for those who like to take pictures. Pictures of the digital kind that is, which going by digital camera sales of late, is a lot of us. Viewing JPEG and other images files on the laptop or PC is one thing, but if you've a decent sized TV, it can be a much better way for the family to sit round and view the holiday snaps. If you're at all PC literate, then using the Picture Viewer will be a doddle, displaying thumbnail views in automatic mode and a list of folders in manual mode, much like on a PC.

For DVD playback, the usual controls and features are all present. One feature that's always been better on the Toshiba DVD players compared with some others is the zoom function, and I know many people use it to 'get rid of those black bars' when watching a Widescreen presentation. It's not

something I personally ever get round to using much, but the Toshiba zoom remains sharp and tight, not like many DVD players that lose any semblance of resolution on the first zoom step.

Hooking the SD-2810 up, I connected it to an Onkyo TX-SR700 receiver with a direct Component Video feed to a Toshiba LCD RPTV. The unit comes with the same remote handset that Toshiba has been supplying with its previous more affordable machines and the '2810's set up menu system is also very similar. This is an aspect of DVD player design that's been massively simplified over the years, from what was a once a very scary and unknown quantity to the technically-bashful, to something's that's had the fear of using well and truly removed. Toshiba's no exception with this simplification of its GUIs (Graphical User Interface) and getting to grips with the SD-2810 won't present any hardship for the greenest of DVD users. Customising the various function settings is simply a matter of scrolling through half a dozen on-screen symbols to select the correct screen type, audio output type and other operational settings. Most will only need to set the initial system settings, a single selection that lets you choose the on-screen language, TV shape and audio out.

In use, it's just as simple to operate and the remote control lays everything out in a logical and user-friendly design. The review sample had no problems playing all the disc-types that it claims to (which is more than can be said for some) and it also loaded and played a Region 1 version of *The World Is Not Enough* and a Region 2 copy of *Human Traffic* without any bother. MP3-encoded discs also played and the Toshiba had no trouble in delving into subdirectories buried on the PC-manufactured test discs in my collection.

I was keen to see how the Digital Image Viewer operated and compiled a disc full of JPEG images for this purpose. The mode takes a while to load and is a bit like viewing a projector slide show of old - albeit viewing on your TV screen and in much better quality. This quality largely depends on the initial image resolution and just how good your screen is, but the results from an inexpensive digital camera are still pretty good.

Higher resolution images from the Internet show just how good the Image Viewer can be and although it's not as

## Vital Statistics

### Dimensions:

430 x 60 x 213mm

### Weight:

2.2kg

### Price:

\$299

### Distributor:

Castel Electronics P/L  
1-21 Beaufort Street  
Preston. VIC 3072

### Telephone:

(03) 9484 3788 or 1800 50 50 51

### Facsimile:

(03) 9480 3868

### Website:

[www.toshiba.net.au](http://www.toshiba.net.au)

crisp or sharp compared to viewing on a computer monitor, the size and resolution on a TV screen is still pretty impressive.

But it's DVD that this machine is primarily about and as co-inventors of the format, Toshiba's pedigree in this regard is second to none. Having just received a copy of the Special Extended Version of *The Lord of The Rings: The Two Towers*, I was keen to see how well the player coped with the numerous dark forest scenes. On a capable player and monitor, this film is as visually stunning as it gets, and the SD-2810 brings out plenty of detail. The scene when Gandalf appears for the first time (illustrated opposite) is a mix of very dark and deep blacks combined with a bright burst of background light. The Toshiba shows great edge definition capability between such contrasting dark and bright images and as we first see the wizard's face, fleshtones appear natural and the high level of detail retrieval shows up every one of the old man's wrinkles. Blacks also show plenty of substance and solidity with colour depth. There's black and then there's real black, and the mark of a DVD player's image depth of field is largely contributed



## Technotalk

### Product Type:

DVD-Video player

### Disc Compatibility:

DVD-Video/CD-Audio/Video CD/  
CD-R/CD-RW/CD-ROM/MP3/  
DVD-R/DVD-RW

### Horizontal Video Resolution:

Over 500 lines

### Video D/A Conversion:

10-bit, 27mHz

### DVD Frequency Response:

4-44,000Hz (96kHz)

### Signal To Noise Ratio:

112dB

### Audio Dynamic Range:

102dB

### Total Harmonic Distortion:

0.002%

### Audio D/A Conversion:

192kHz/24-bit

### Digital Output:

Dolby Digital/DTS/MPEG/PCM

Technotalk specifications and recommended retail prices are supplied by the manufacturer

“Blacks also show plenty of substance and solidity with colour depth. There’s black and then there’s real black, and the mark of a DVD player’s image depth of field is largely contributed to the quality of its black rendition. Compared to less expensive and less capable machines, this affordable Toshiba is a fine performer with all aspects of its image quality.”

to the quality of its black rendition. Compared to less expensive and less capable machines, this affordable Toshiba is a fine performer with all aspects of its image quality. It looks as



*The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* contains many dark scenes that need a well contrasted machine like this new Toshiba to bring out the best of this vividly detailed film

good as some more expensive machines I’ve come across lately and although not quite as detailed or resolved as my reference Onkyo DV-SP800 universal machine, it comes pretty darn close.

The multichannel audio quality of the Toshiba depends largely on the quality of partnering processing and amplification. Fed via the optical digital output, the Toshiba provides a stable data stream and there’s no hint of any abnormalities, such as any lip-sync problems.

It does contain 192kHz/24-bit DACs for the audio data crunching and as a music disc player, turns in a very respectable performance. With do-it-yourself audio discs, like a collection of MP3s, the SD-2810 shows no sign of over compression or lack of credible dynamics with the audio format. As long as the original files are of adequate quality of course, this Toshiba sounds lively, fast and wide-open with a wide range of music. Simply recorded acoustic music has bags of presence and discs like David Sylvian’s latest, *Blemish*, sound wonderfully natural, with crisp imaging and excellent bass presence. His closely-miked vocals drip with atmosphere and impact and the unusual collection of backing instruments are well-positioned and easily followed within the mix.

For the money, Toshiba’s very affordable DVD player line-up still proves a hard act to beat. With more useful features than before and continually improving performance, it’s not a gamble when you purchase a machine like this one. Spending the extra few dollars for peace of mind is well worth it. AVL

**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, Black Box mains conditioner, Audioquest cables

## 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

“...if you’ve never heard of brands such as Panaha or Yamasonic, there’s a good reason why not and you’re better off giving them a wide berth.”

### Performance

★★★★★

### Build Quality

★★★★★

### Compatibility

★★★★★

### Value For Money

★★★★★