



CAMBRIDGE AUDIO SONATA DV30 £200

If it's possible to make such a thing as a niche DVD player, this is it. The DV30 is instantly apparently holed beneath the water line because it is not a Blu-ray player. Why on earth buy a DVD spinner that plays only old formats, you ask? And it's a tricky question, but the DV30 does answer it, in a way. The reason is that it's a Cambridge Audio design, with some very clever fettling work done to the audio side by the company's arch tweeker Matt Bramble. He himself confided to *Hi-Fi World* that he was surprised by how good the DV30 has ended up, sonically, and he's right. Used as a CD player, the latest Wolfson WB8746 DACs he's fitted (and carefully laid out on the board with better than expected passive components and lots of attention

paid to signal routing and grounding), gives a surprisingly svelte musical performance. It's not going to knock the top Cambridge Audio CD player off its perch, but suffice to say the DV30 doesn't sound plain nasty like most DVD spinners at its lowly price point. There's a decent amount of detail, at least an attempt made at throwing out a soundstage with a degree of depth, and a reasonable musical gait to the way rhythms are handled. It's also tonally smooth too, with no nasties up top. The overall effect is of a digital player that's just listenable in a serious system, one that's not so obstructive with the music that it has you running for the stop button.

The figure of eight IEC socket at the back means you can use an audiophile power lead (not logical if you don't have one already, I know,

but it certainly helps if you do), and the Cambridge also really enjoyed a pair of Missing Link Cryo Reference interconnects which smoothed things even more. Most rival machines are so bad they simply don't reward any tweaking. The 1080p upscaling video quality is superb at the price (remembering the fact that it's not Blu-ray, of course), with a clarity, crispness and colour that high end Denons would struggle to provide five years back. It's a decent transport then, via HDMI. The half size dimensions of the DV30 (270x285x67mm) are welcome (why have a full size machine when most are full of air?) and the build is decent for its price; I particularly liked the chunky brushed aluminium front panel, and the metallised remote feels nicer than that of most high end hi-fi CD players. It supports CD, DVD-V, CD-R/RW, DVD-R/RW, DVD+R/RW, DivX and MP4 formats. So providing you're not desperate to invest in Blu-ray, which really only comes into its own on truly large TVs, and want a fine do-it-all disc player that sounds better than it should, this is one to consider. It's an unusual machine alright, but not unendearing. **DP**

[Contact: +44 (0)845 900 1230
www.cambridgeaudio.com]

soundbites

MAD MY ENGLAND IEC £399/1M

Another quirky cable from the MyAudioDesign stable, this sports the company's proprietary 'Hexial' woven construction, with Golden Section, Constant Q & Crossfield Technologies invented by Cardas Audio. It uses multiple strands of 6N 1.35mm oxygen-free copper, Teflon coated, surrounded by a polyester monofilaments braid that's very attractive looking, if you like that sort of thing! High quality mains plugs (3-pin and IEC) are used at either end. The stated aims of the design are simply to make sure the cable isn't susceptible to RFI or cable resonance; certainly the later feature works well and isn't to be sneezed at, because cables feed ground and air-

borne vibration into hi-fi equipment, muddying the sound. This unusually named cable works very well, even given its serious pricing, providing a very clean and open sound, and one that helps good equipment 'incise' into the recording. Tonally it's very neutral, with a nice fluid bass and strong dynamics. An unusual product, but well worth trying all the same. **DP**

[Contact: 0208 1239 789 /
0778 2137 868
www.madengland.com]

