

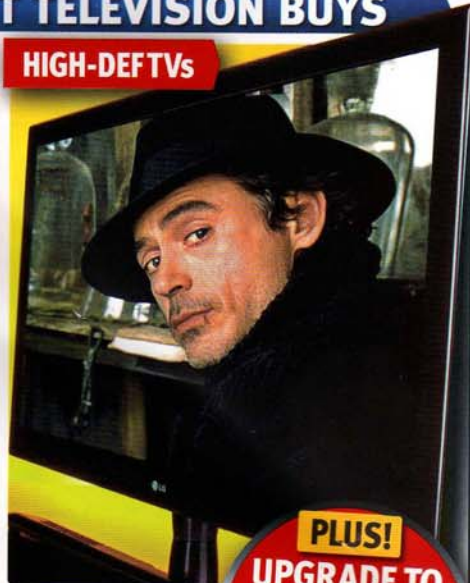
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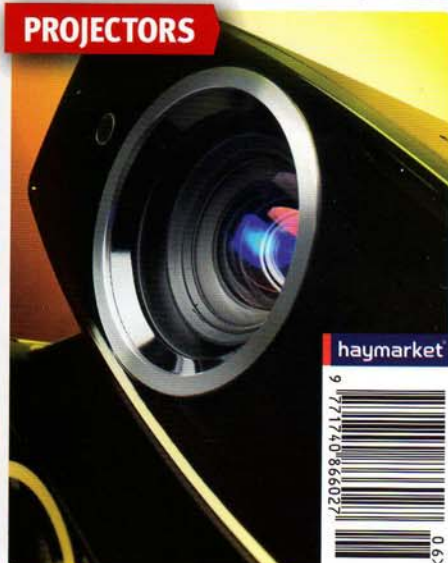
3D GAMING



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PROJECTORS



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# BLU-RAY PLAYERS

Superior quality, better features and now more HD movies and services. DVD? Where we're going we don't need DVD...

**Keeping it real**  
Full HD, 24fps, 1080p ... all confusing (go to p158) – but important if you want an image as cinematic as can be

**Rank of profile**  
Does it have the latest Profile (ie, 2.0), and Ethernet? For BD-Live and downloading fun, they're a must

**Format flexible**  
Blu-ray's great but what about poor old DVD? A good upscaler is a factor, and it'll save on buying more discs

## Reviewed this issue

<b>Best buy up to £350</b>	
Sony BDP-S370	£170   p90
<b>Best of the rest up to £350</b>	
Panasonic DMP-BD65	£180   p92
Philips BDP7500	£250   p92
Panasonic DMP-BD85	£280   p93
Sony BDP-S760	£330   p93
<b>Best buy £350-£650</b>	
Cambridge Audio Azur 650BD	£400   p94
<b>Best of the rest £350-£650</b>	
Samsung BD-C6900	£349   p96
Denon DBP-1610	£400   p96
Panasonic DMR-XW380	£550   p97
Denon DBP-2010	£600   p97
<b>Best buy over £650</b>	
Marantz BD7004	£700   p98
<b>Best of the rest over £650</b>	
Sony BDP-S5000ES	£1100   p100
Pioneer BDP-LX91	£2000   p100
Marantz UD8004	£2449   p101
Marantz UD9004	£5000   p101

**“With the UD9004, Blu-ray is stunning, conjuring a picture with a lustre that’s incredible” p101**

# Marantz BD7004 | £700

★★★★★ www.marantz.com

Yes, some cheaper BD decks can comprehensively outgun its spec, but the BD7004's outstanding quality shines through

**FOR**  
Rich, vivid picture; excellent edge definition; good DVD upscaling; detailed and dynamic sound

**AGAINST**  
Sluggish and slow to load; basic spec

**VERDICT**  
Marantz's rich vein of form continues with another cracking Blu-ray all-rounder

**GIVEN THE RAPID** advances in Blu-ray technology of late, it might seem odd to recommend a player so apparently conventional as this Marantz. Yet if it were a racehorse, you'd back it to the hilt, because the BD7004 definitely stems from good stock. We've already handed its bigger brothers, the UD8004 and UD9004, glowing five-star reviews: turn the page for more on those two.

Yet first impressions of this player are mixed. Yes, the '7004 is Profile 2.0 enabled and Ethernet-equipped and, as it ought to, it can bitstream or internally decode high-definition audio formats over HDMI or an eight-channel analogue output.

**"The Marantz might be slow to operate, but it atones with its simply fantastic Blu-ray images and excellent sound"**

There's a fair degree of file support too, including MP3, WMA, AVCHD and DivX HD, plus there's an SD card slot on the front panel, too.

But, on the downside, you don't get any inbuilt memory for BD-Live use: instead, you're obliged to buy and insert an SD card into the player's fascia. That's not necessarily a huge issue, but it does mean you have to choose between BD-Live and file-format replay: rivals give you

the option of both at the same time. There's no mention of Wi-Fi, DLNA, iPlayer access or 3D support either – all of which you can get in cheaper players tested in these pages.

**Great quality is the key**  
But, as we've said so many times before, there's more to a great piece of kit than simply features. The BD7004 might be slow to operate and spare of spec, but it atones for all of this with its simply fantastic Blu-ray and DVD images. It paints a rich picture that bursts with life: *Up on Blu-ray* is judged exceptionally well – it's vibrant, but not garish, and there's great depth to the image, aided by pin-sharp edge definition and superlative motion.

The BD7004 has excellent sound too. Whether it's the explosive DTS-HD Master Audio soundtrack of *Terminator: Salvation* or the spacious and detail-driven score of *Sherlock Holmes*, the '7004 displays a fine balance of detailed, sparking treble and weighty midrange and bass. It's also an excellent CD player, coping with complex rhythms and driving beats with genuine composure. It's this latter achievement – the ability to sound engaging with movies and music – that really marks the BD7004 out as something special.

Of course, the Marantz isn't cheap, and it'd be fair to say its abilities might be wasted on some buyers. But all the same – what a player.



**SMOOTH OPERATOR**

Yes, it's slow to load discs, and yes, that can get frustrating at times, but just check out the slick way the disc tray slides out. There, now you feel better.

**SLOT IT TO ME**

You'll need an SD card if you want your Marantz to replay digital music files, such as MP3, but if you'd prefer to use BD-Live, that won't work.

**HEY GOOD LOOKIN'**

Yes, it costs £700, and yes, that's more money than most people will ever want to spend on a Blu-ray player, but all the same, this is a classy design.

**WHAT MAKES IT SPECIAL?**



**Hi-fi cred from a hi-fi brand**  
The Marantz is built differently from most cheaper BD decks: it's chunkier, its hefty casing weighing in at nearly 5kg, and its disc mechanism operates with an assured, silky smoothness. While there are some signs of cost-cutting here and there relative to the company's more expensive players, there's no denying the Marantz both looks and feels the part.

It's also equipped with onboard decoding for all forms of HD audio, complete with analogue audio outputs for up to 7.1 channels of sound, plus a pair of stereo analogue outs for music use. That makes it a great upgrade for older home cinema receivers.

**SPECS**

**PLAYS** Blu-ray, DVD, CD, MP3, DivX, AVCHD, DVD-R/-RW, DVD+R/+RW  
**VIDEO OUTPUTS** HDMI, component, composite  
**AUDIO OUTPUTS** Coaxial digital, stereo phono, 7.1ch analogue  
**HD AUDIO CODECS** All formats  
**1080P/24FPS/HDMI 1.3/UPSCALING** Yes  
**BD PROFILE 2.0**  
**SIZE (hwd)** 11 x 44 x 32cm  
**WEIGHT** 4.9kg

**PERFECT PARTNERS SYSTEM PRICE £8800**



**PROJECTOR**  
JVC DLA-HD550  
★★★★★  
**£ 4000**  
If you're spending this much on your Blu-ray player you'll need a high-quality display to really see what it can do. There's little around for vaguely sensible money to touch this JVC: it's an extraordinary projector. See p130.



**AV RECEIVER**  
DENON AVR-4310 ★★★★★  
**£ 1900**  
Marantz's own matching receivers are a perfectly acceptable option if you prefer the notion of a system that matches aesthetically, but this Denon is just as capable sonically, with the added advantage that it's a more web-friendly beastie: it even streams Napster.

**FULL-SIZE SPEAKERS**  
MONITOR AUDIO RX6  
★★★★★  
**£ 2200**  
We've eulogised about this full-size speaker package many times, and for good reason: aside from its forceful sound and room-filling power, its key attraction is an uncanny ability to blend such a muscular presentation with such musical insight. That makes it the perfect foil for the other components in our system.



**USE QUALITY CABLE**  
See p142

**TRY THESE**

**THESE GREAT TEST DISCS WILL REALLY PUSH THE '7004**



**SHERLOCK HOLMES**  
Belting fun, even if it does take all manner of liberties too – but the real deal here is the terrific sound.



**THE LORD OF THE RINGS TRILOGY**  
DVD  
Yes, it's on Blu-ray, but play the DVDs on the Marantz, and you'll appreciate its superior scaling.



**BROKEN BELLS**  
CD  
Sweet melodies that can ably illustrate the Marantz's fluid touch: you'll be transported to a happier place...

## Marantz UD8004



£2449

**THESE DAYS, A** reasonably decent player costs around £150, and an excellent one isn't much more – so why spend nearly £2500?

Marantz's chunky new UD8004 may not be 15 times better than a Sony BDP-S370 (our best buy up to £350, on p90), but such crude arithmetic is irrelevant: what's clear is that the UD8004 is transparently, almost transcendently, superior to any cheaper Blu-ray player you might care to mention.

**“The punchy transfer of Pixar's *Up* is stupendous to behold with the '8004”**

The '8004 has been designed as a more affordable version of Marantz's flagship £5000 UD9004 (below). Like that player, it can cope with Blu-ray, DVD-Video, DVD-Audio, SACD and CD, plus a variety of digital file formats loaded via SD card. It's heavily built (if not quite as lavishly as the '9004) and, predictably, top-quality components litter its layout.

**↑ FOR**

Exceptional picture quality; fabulous sound; extensive spec; quality build and styling

**↓ AGAINST**

Hardly cheap; next-gen players will be 3D-compatible – and this isn't

**→ VERDICT**

A brilliant player – if you want one box to do it all, it's as close as we've heard, short of the even-pricier UD9004



Video processing is by Anchor Bay's ABT2010 chip, which provides powerful deinterlacing, scaling and image enhancement, while Analog Devices supply ADV7340 2-bit/297MHz video DACs. Together, these ensure the UD8004 delivers a thrilling picture: every aspect, from colour vibrancy and black-level uniformity to overall clarity and detail, is superb. *The Hurt Locker's* noisy long shots display gritty attention to detail and commendable stability, while punchier transfers, such as Pixar's *Up*, are stupendous to behold.

But if that's impressive, the Marantz's sound is just wondrous. It's here that it asserts its clear superiority over both budget and mid-priced kit, and does so emphatically: whether you're revelling in the power of a DTS-HD surround mix or captivated by the emotional realism of a stereo

SACD, the UD8004's mighty clarity and power is sure to stun.

With a 32-bit SHARC chip to handle surround decoding, plus 24-bit/192kHz Burr-Brown DACs on all channels, there's no shortage of tech cred. Even so, it's occasionally hard to credit the sonic superiority of this player over cheaper rivals.

Naturally, the pricier UD9004 is even better (as it ought to be), but the '8004 costs half as much, and will be more than adequate for most systems. Until 3D-ready Blu-ray players hit the UK later this year, it's as good as it gets at the price.

**SPECIFICATION**

**Plays** Blu-ray, DVD-A, SACD, DVD+R/RW, CD, JPEG, AVCHD, DivX **Outputs** HDMI, component, composite, coaxial, optical, 7.1ch **1080p/24fps/HDMI 1.3a** Yes **HD audio** All **BD Profile 2.0** **Size** 12x44x39cm

www.marantz.com 01753 680 868

## Marantz UD9004



£5000

**WE'VE SEEN PREMIUM** Blu-ray players, but never one as costly as Marantz's UD9004: this £5000 'universal' player can spin Blu-ray, DVD-Video and DVD-Audio, SACD and CD.

Unlike many high-end designs, it's Profile 2.0 enabled, complete with an Ethernet port and SD-card slot for BD-Live – but the Marantz looks and feels more like a high-end CD player. It's huge, its 19.2kg chassis dwarfing most contemporaries:

**“Spin *Wolverine*, and the UD9004's blessed with glorious richness”**

lavishly machined slabs of zinc, copper, aluminium and steel abound, each delivering the optimum durability and stability.

It'd be a surprise, after all this build-up, if the Marantz didn't deliver the sonic goods, but it does – in diamond-encrusted spades. In stereo, its balance sounds uncannily similar to the audio-only SA-7S1. Connected via XLRs into our

**↑ FOR**

Fabulous picture and home cinema sound; genuinely musical, high-end stereo sound; strong spec; superlative build

**↓ AGAINST**

Nothing, so long as you can afford it

**→ VERDICT**

The best Blu-ray all-rounder yet, although the price means it's only for the fortunate few. Still, let's hope this is a pathfinder for cheaper but equally flexible players to follow



reference system, the UD9004 is assured, effortless and genuinely delightful: it polishes the top-end of some harsher discs, for sure, but never at the expense of accuracy or detail.

**Gorgeous Blu-ray pictures**

Blu-ray is stunning, too. Aided by 14-bit/297MHz Analog Devices video DACs and the widely revered Silicon Optix Realta HQV video processor, the UD9004 conjures a wonderful picture, with a lustre that's incredible. With BDs such as *Wolverine* and *The Dark Knight*, the Marantz's picture is blessed with glorious richness and variation in texture, while even older, less spectacular DVD transfers are crisp.

Film sound is equally striking, whether you decode onboard to the

Marantz's analogue outputs or stream digitally via HDMI: in every sonic aspect, from realism to sheer power, there's much to admire here.

This unit isn't so much a high-end BD player that's able to play CDs as it is a high-end CD player able to play BDs. And judged on those terms, it's a spectacular thing: in essence, you're getting a Marantz SA-7S1 plus a top-quality Blu-ray player thrown in for free. Which means that this £5000 slice of exotica is actually a bargain...

**SPECIFICATION**

**Plays** BD, DVD, SACD, CD, CD-RW, DVD+R/RW, MP3, DivX, AAC, JPEG **Outs** 2x HDMI, S-Video, component, c'posite, coaxial, optical, 7.1ch **1080p/24fps/HDMI 1.3a** Yes **HD audio** All **Profile 2.0** **Size** 44x41x16cm

www.marantz.com 01753 680 868