



One last hurrah for the silver disc?

Jon Thompson once wondered if he'd ever see a new universal disc-spinner – Reavon's UBR-X200 therefore feels like a breath of fresh air, despite one or two missed tricks

2021 HASN'T BEEN a good year for many things but it's been a cracker for 4K Blu-ray. A wealth of titles has already been released, and the run up to Christmas promises a bumper crop, including those from fan-fave label Criterion, which is entering the 4K disc space with some real gems. So, you're going to need something to spin all these new titles on. And what are the options if you don't yet have a UHD disc player?

Many companies have left the 4K BD market, including Oppo and Samsung. Pioneer ostensibly soldiers on but its UK distribution appears to be in tatters. Panasonic and Sony continue to support the format, yet neither sell a do-it-all disc spinner able to handle 4K BD, Super Audio CD and DVD-Audio. Two of those formats are very niche indeed, but people still look for the logos...

Enter Reavon, a brand that none of us had heard of this time last year. Reavon is a spin off from French company Archisoft, which is also behind the media players sold under the Zappiti brand. It's seen an opening in the market and taken a punt, producing two UHD Blu-ray machines.

The UBR-X200 auditioned here is a universal player as it supports SACD, DVD-A and everything from CD to 4K Dolby Vision. The one thing it is missing is HDR10+ support, which is a niggle, as suddenly it doesn't feel quite so universal. That said, this open-source format has never really taken hold on 4K Blu-ray, leaving Dolby Vision as the dominant dynamic metadata standard in this field.

AV INFO

PRODUCT: Universal 4K Blu-ray player

POSITION: The more premium of two models from Reavon

PEERS: Pioneer UB9-LX500; Oppo UDP-205; Panasonic DP-UB9000

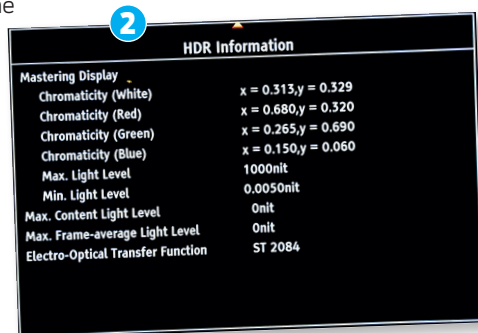
Pricing is a premium £1,500. Reavon's other model, the UBR-X100, sells for a more palatable £700, but jettisons Super Audio CD playback and the UBR-X200's analogue audio outputs.

These connections are what most obviously separates Reavon's deck from the high street competition. Not only does the UBR-X200 have a full set of 7.1 RCA outputs (tethered to an eight-channel Burr-Brown PCM1690 DAC), there's a separate stereo output offered on both unbalanced RCA and balanced XLR. This is reminiscent of Oppo's UDP-205, although that heavyweight (and no longer available) universal player used a premium ESS Sabre 32-bit DAC chip, whereas the X200's dedicated stereo DAC is a 24-bit delta-sigma design. Of course, Oppo withdrew from the Blu-ray player market, presumably because it wasn't making any money. So maybe saving pennies on DACs is the way to go.

The design and build of the Reavon UBR-X200 is first-rate, as you'd expect given its price. It's full-width, with an all-metal case and a solid and heavy feel. It looks smart and sleek. In fact, it's appreciably slimmer than Oppo's UDP-205 or Pioneer's UB9 models.

There's a USB 2.0 port on the front, to complement the USB 3.0 port on the back (to me, it would make sense if this was the other way around).

The supplied remote is well designed, and backlit at the touch of a button (there's no motion sensing here).



SPECIFICATIONS

3D: Yes **ULTRA HD:** Yes **HDR:** Yes. HDR10; Dolby Vision **UPSCALING:** Yes. 2,160p **MULTIREGION:** No. Region B BD **HDMI:** Yes. 2 x outputs (one audio-only) **MULTICHANNEL ANALOGUE OUTPUT:** Yes. 7.1 **DIGITAL AUDIO OUTPUT:** Yes. 1 x optical digital audio; 1 x coaxial digital audio **ETHERNET:** Yes **BUILT IN WI-FI:** No **SACD/DVD-A:** Yes/Yes **DIMENSIONS:** 430(w) x 82(h) x 351(d)mm **WEIGHT:** 6.8kg

FEATURES: Balanced XLR and RCA stereo analogue outputs; 2 x USBs (one front-mounted); media playback supports MP3, FLAC, AIFF, DSF/DFP, OGG and APE; media display screen including MaxFALL and MaxCLL; Mediatek MTK8581 chipset; Direct playback mode; eight-channel DAC

my usual Oppo UDP-205, I found the Reavon brought slightly more punch and depth to the stereo audio track (over HDMI). Similarly, the Swedish Nightingale sequence of *The Greatest Showman* (4K BD) felt a little gutsier. The image also appeared (via a side-by-side comparison) to be sharper and better delineated, which I imagine could be a benefit of the Reavon player's toroidal-based power supply.

Next was a DVD of *Fleetwood Mac: The Dance*. It handled the challenging dynamics of this concert very well, and completed the NTSC 2:2 pulldown with ease. For this sort of legacy video content, you can either have the Reavon upscale your images, or run it in source direct mode – useful if you have an outboard scaler in your system.

Right now, the UBR-X200's closest competitor is Panasonic's DP-UB9000 (£900). That player is considerably more affordable but lacks SACD support, pitting it more closely against the UBR-X100. Interestingly, after some A/B testing, I felt I preferred the Panasonic's dynamic tone-mapping, but not its sonic chops. That said, the ability to have the UBR-X200 handle tone-mapping, rather than your display, is great for projector-based setups, and it gives a result that most people would be more than happy with. The UB9000 just did it slightly better, bringing more pop to the picture.

Blu-ray bounces back

Reavon's UBR-X200 is worthy of your consideration. It helps, of course, that it's currently the market leader in a field of one. Nor is it perfect. If you want an all-singing universal player that's also a great streamer this is not it – we'd hope for firmware updates to bolster its media player side. But for DVD/Blu-ray/4K Blu-ray/SACD playback this has scads of appeal. Bienvenue, Reavon! ■

HCC VERDICT



Reavon UBR-X200
→ £1,500 → www.reavon.com

WE SAY: There's no getting around the fact this deck is expensive and misses out on some features you'd want at the price, but its disc-spinning talents can't be sniffed at.

