

Marantz UD7006 £800

★★★★★ www.marantz.co.uk

Marantz blazes into the 3D arena with a multi-format player that sets the bar at a vertigo-inducing height

Last year, Marantz's midrange and high-end Blu-ray players stole the show at their respective price-points, nailing five-star ratings with exceedingly impressive ease.

The UD7006 is the company's first 3D-ready machine. It's a fully universal deck so SACDs and DVD-A discs can be taken for a spin, although it's a little slower to load than the Cambridge Audio or Oppo BDP-95EU (see p43).

The player boasts onboard decoding and a set of eight-channel analogue inputs so owners of older AV amps with no HDMI inputs can take advantage of high-def surround sound formats. This also helps alleviate any potential issues if your amp isn't 3D compatible. Instead of requiring a second HDMI output, you can feed the HDMI picture to your display and use the multichannel output for sound. It's not as convenient as having two HDMI outputs, but it's the next best thing.

DLNA certification means you can use the UD7006 as a client to stream music, video and photo files stored on a home network.

Stunning picture across the board

Image quality is outstanding. Armed with the Blu-ray of *Paul*, the UD7006 paints a stunningly detailed and texture-rich picture. The way the Marantz handles the alien's skin tone, texture and colour has to be applauded. Edges remain rock-solid throughout pans and frenzied movements. Fine detail is easily rendered.

The shift to 3D playback produces equally stunning results. With *Avatar*, the depth of field on show looks realistic and believable.

Drop to DVD resolution and the Marantz shows no sign of letting up. You won't even need to play with the integrated picture adjustment

because it's so accomplished. The way it minimises the impact of noise is excellent at this accomplished level.

The energetic delivery translates to DVD-A, SACD and normal CD playback too. The Marantz's musicality and fine sense of rhythm keep the listener entertained. Listen to Frankie Goes To Hollywood's *Relax* on SACD, and the listener does

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anything but. The track is delivered with an infectious enthusiasm that keeps you hooked.

Engage the Pure Direct button on the glow-in-the-dark remote and the display and video-processing circuitry shuts down. Resolution and detail take a subtle lift.

Despite its slow uptake of smart functionality, the UD7006 makes up for it with its spectacular handling of movies and music.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Awesome 2D and 3D Blu-ray pictures; a deft DVD upscaler; rhythmic and dynamic sound

AGAINST Limited 'smart' functionality; a tad too slow to load discs

VERDICT For the money, this amazing Marantz is a serious candidate for best-in-class

ANALOGUE BONUS

Eight-channel analogue inputs are included, so if your AV amp isn't HDMI-compatible, you can still enjoy high-def surround sound.

ACE WITH EVERY SOURCE

There aren't really any weak links in the Marantz's playback chain. Top quality is assured with movies and music, whether you're using Blu-ray, DVD, CD or SACD.

YOU'RE ON YOUTUBE

The Marantz doesn't have anywhere near the level of 'smart' functionality offered by budget decks, but it does at least allow you to stream video from YouTube.



Try these

A CLUSTER OF HD DISCS TO TEST THE MARANTZ



ATTACK THE BLOCK
'Adam and' Joe Cornish directs this 'hoodies vs aliens' horror-com - it's fast, funny, and a dark demand for the UD7006.



STAR WARS: THE COMPLETE SAGA
Oh yeah, at last. All six films in one glorious nine-disc, feature-stuffed Blu-ray set. In HD, we might grow to like Jar Jar. Might.



TANGLED 3D
Disney goes back to the fairytale well and finds its mojo in this fantastic and vibrant animated flick, which shows off a real depth and distance in 3D.

What makes it special?



Multichannel music maker

The Marantz is a so-called universal disc player, able to spin both conventional DVD and Blu-ray discs, and a pair of dedicated multichannel music formats: DVD-Audio and SACD (Super Audio CD). Neither format made much of an impact on the market and both are little talked about these days, but well-produced examples of either disc are capable of sounding terrific. To hear them at their best, you'll need a larger 5.1 speaker system, ideally with hi-fi style speakers for each channel: smaller speakers will sound constrained, while dedicated bipoles or dipoles will just sound weird.

TECH SPECS

Plays 3D/2D Blu-ray, DVD, DVD-Audio, DVD-R/-RW, DVD R/RW, CD, DivX HD, AVCHD, JPEG, MP3, AAC, WMA, WAV
Outputs HDMI, component, multichannel analogue, phono, coaxial digital, composite

Inputs Ethernet
Output via HDMI Dolby Digital/Plus/TrueHD, DTS-HD Master Audio
Onboard decoding Yes
Size (hwd) 11 x 44 x 33cm
Weight 4.8kg

Perfect partners System price £17,230

PLASMA TV
Panasonic TX-P65VT30
£4500 ★★★★★
As you can read elsewhere (p36), this is one of the finest TVs ever made, a 65in giant endowed with spectacular picture performance and a specification to match. Equally adept showing broadcast HD (via either Freesat or Freeview HD) or 3D Blu-ray, the VT30 is a great choice here, its formidable contrast and smooth motion giving films a polished, cinematic lustre.

AV RECEIVER
Marantz SR7005
£1400 ★★★★★
Eight 3D-compatible HDMI's (six in, two out) 7x125W surround sound configuration, ethernet networking and Apple AirPlay compatibility all feature here in a receiver that steers effects intimately and securely, and performs with brio. Its approach to the midrange is a touch muscle-bound, but this is still a pleasantly beefy, beautifully made (and presented) partner for the UD7006.

SPEAKER PACKAGE
Dali Ikon 6 Mk25.1
£2900 ★★★★★
It's the sheer scale of the Dali package's presentation that's most immediately impressive. There's a deep, wide, tall soundstage that charges through the dynamic peaks and troughs without breaking sweat. Focus and separation are good, effects are seamlessly steered and the subwoofer might just be Dali's best yet.

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SEE P6.
ADD A MEDIA SERVER TO YOUR AV SYSTEM