

93% WHAT HOME CINEMA

€295

Cambridge Audio DVD86

Cambridge Audio have a real exclusive on their hands here: a feature-rich performer of a DVD player at a silly price

RATINGS	
STYLE	★★★★★
EASE OF USE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
PICTURE	★★★★★
SOUND	★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★★
OVERALL	★★★★★

Even though features have been pared back, Cambridge Audio hasn't skimped on build quality with its budget DVD86, which is one of the smartest looking players for the price.

Unlike the company's flagship player, the DVD89, neither

DVD-Audio or SACD high-res audio formats are playable, it's a bit fussy about playing MP3 or WMA music files stored on CD-R/RWs. However, it

is region-free straight from the box.

There's no provision for hi-def DVD playback, but a built-in up-converter enhances standard DVD images for 720p and 1080i screen resolutions.

Headline act

Connections headline with HDMI output. There's also a standard assortment of analogue video connections, including component video sockets enabled with PAL and NTSC progressive scan output, RGB Scart and S-video connections.

Onscreen graphics look disappointing, and basic menu options are inappropriately labelled 'common' and 'professional' setup. But regardless of their appearance, they provide all the

necessary adjustment options.

Not that the DVD86 requires much in the way of picture adjustments. HDMI images are top notch with excellent colour balance and detail levels. Pictures are further enhanced by choosing one of the higher resolution output modes, which

demonstrates improved crispness and detail levels under closer scrutiny.

Colours with component video signals are

good and detail levels are impressive, if a little soft. Further enhancements can be achieved by switching the sharpness mode to its medium or high mode, which pulls details into sharper focus without adding significantly to picture noise. Motion is fluid with the flight sequences while watching our test DVD of Top

Gun, and black levels are impressive.

When it comes to audio the DVD86 gives no cause for complaint. Okay, there's no six-channel audio output for SACD or DVD-Audio disc output, but the Cambridge Audio doesn't let itself down when it comes to getting the most from surround soundtracks. 5.1 movies are full of energy and free from any flaws via the digital optical output. Stereo analogue outputs are also respectably clean, and the DVD86 doubles as a great sounding CD player and makes a great source as part of a hi-fi system.

Level crossing

There are hardly any grumbles to level at the Cambridge Audio DVD86 at the price. It successfully balances features and performance while its multi-region capabilities will have a wide appeal and ensure that it's forgiven any lesser format playback inflexibilities

TEST SCENE

>Top Gun



Picture depth is good and motion is fluid throughout the aircraft sequences, giving an impressively cinematic performance at a budget price

AT A GLANCE

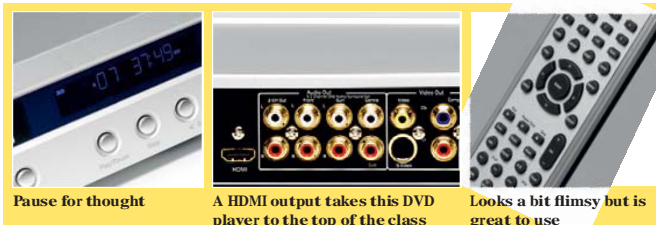
FEATURES

PAL/NTSC progressive scan
Multi-region playback
DVD+R/RW and DVD-R/RW playback
DivX playback
JPEG photo playback
720p and 1080i up-converting

CONNECTIONS

HDMI output
RGB-enabled Scart output
Component video output
S-video output
Composite video output
Optical digital output
Coaxial digital output
5.1-channel analogue output
Stereo analogue output

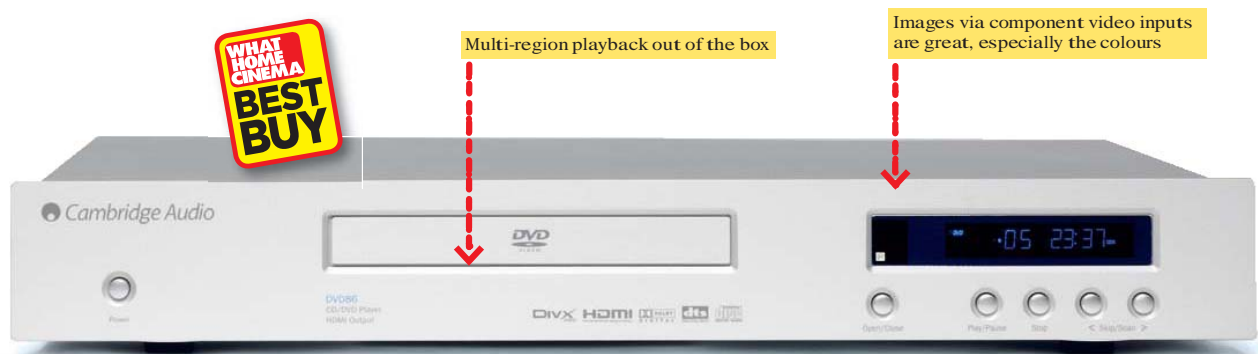
SELECTING THE HIGH SHARPNESS MODE SERVES TO ENHANCE THE PICTURE MORE



Pause for thought

A HDMI output takes this DVD player to the top of the class

Looks a bit flimsy but is great to use



WHAT HOME CINEMA
BEST BUY

Multi-region playback out of the box

Images via component video inputs are great, especially the colours