

Latest burners

Darren Yates tests a dozen of the latest internal and external burners, including new Blu-ray drives.

While the number of brands in the DVD burner market has shrunk in recent years, there are still a good half-dozen or so brands launching new drives. This month's roundup revealed 24x internal DVD burners, new external burners with Blu-ray read support and internal Blu-ray combo drives selling for as little as \$140. Unfortunately, Blu-ray burners continue to hover around the \$300 mark

and with media prices sitting at around \$9 for a write-once 25GB Blu-ray disc, the required boost in demand to push prices down isn't likely to happen any time soon. By contrast, internal DVD burners are almost a steal these days at under \$40.

— HOW WE TESTED

Each drive was connected to a 3GHz Core 2 Extreme X9650 desktop PC running the 64-bit

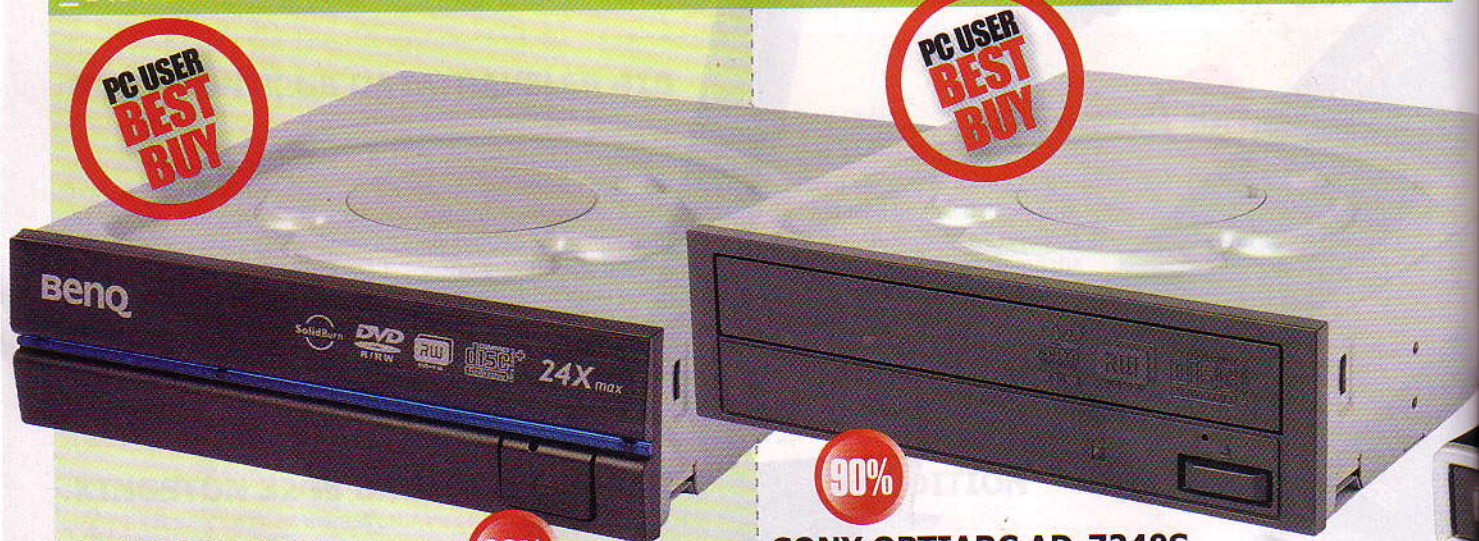
version of Windows 7 Ultimate with a Samsung 500GB HD502LJ hard drive. Using Nero 8 Essentials software, we burned a 4.695GB single-layer DVD using 16x Sony DVD-R media with the media identification (MID) code of SONY16D1, purchased from retailer JB Hi-Fi.

The disc burn speed was timed using the output from Nero 8 Essentials and then tested using KProbe 2.5.2 disc analysis

software running at 4x on a Gigabyte GO-W0808A DVD burner. The burn speed and overall disc quality, along with the various features and price, were factored in to produce an overall score for each unit out of 100.

Make sure you take a look at the 'Error test results' box on page 49 to find out more about how to read the results of our testing.

— INTERNAL DVD BURNERS



BENQ DW240S

PRICE \$35 / WEB www.benq.com.au

The DW240S was the cheapest internal DVD burner we saw at just \$35. If you've been reading *PC User* for a while, you may remember when we reviewed internal DVD burners at prices of over \$500! Although it would only burn the Sony test media at its 16x rate, it did so with the least number of errors in this group. Its peak PI error count of 38 matched the Sony AD-7240S, but everywhere else, its error levels were lower. Its burn time of 6 minutes 51 seconds was slow for a nominal 16x burn, although it wasn't the slowest we saw. It certainly didn't hurt

burn quality either. The only downside we could see with the DW240S drive is that you get 8x double-layer burning rather than 12x on the other three drives. There's also no front-panel LED to indicate that the drive is actually burning and it's the only drive we've seen not to have this. The unit comes in a retail box with Nero 8 Essentials software. It doesn't support LightScribe laser-label etching, but we don't think that's a problem.

PC User says: The cheapest drive we saw and delivers good value and burn quality.

SONY OPTIARC AD-7240S

PRICE \$39 / WEB www.sony-optiarc.us

Sony is the big name behind the Optiarc brand and this AD-7240S internal DVD burner is pretty decent value. It's capable of burning at 24x on selected DVD-R and DVD+R media, but what surprised us was Sony's own 16x DVD-R (SONY16D1) media wouldn't burn at more than 18x. If the AD-7240S won't hit 24x on Sony's own media, we're left wondering on which media it will reach 24x. Its performance was very good, with a full 4.7GB DVD-R burn taking around five minutes. Error scanning showed up nothing untoward, with a PI error peak of 38 and total

PIF errors under 2,000. These are great test results from an 'overclocked' 18x burn. The BenQ DW240S delivered slightly better burn quality, although at a slower 16x burn rate. The BenQ drive also tops out at just 8x on double-layer media (the AD-7240S can burn this at 12x). Our test sample arrived as an OEM unit in a plastic bag with a Nero 8 Essentials disc inside, but buying it this way saves money and packaging that most people don't really need.

PC User says: This is a decent performer and capable of fast 12x double-layer burning.