



The latest Which? tests reveal five new Best Buy DVD recorders, including the UK's first Blu-ray models for recording HD TV to disc

New ways to record TV

Recording from TV now has more options with the launch of the UK's first Blu-ray DVD recorders, which can record high-definition Freesat TV programmes to disc.

We put these latest Blu-ray models – both from Panasonic – through our extensive test program, and our experts were impressed by what they saw. They're still expensive compared to DVD recorders, though expect prices to come down over time.

Essentially PVRs, these Blu-ray recorders feature twin Freesat tuners. They access Freesat high- and standard-definition broadcasts and record them to hard disk using signals received by your satellite dish. Programmes can then be copied from the hard disk to Blu-ray disc, though on some programmes high-definition copying to Blu-ray may be limited by the broadcaster to one copy, or even prohibited altogether. Standard definition programmes can be copied to DVD.

Blu-ray recorders use either BD-R discs which can only be used once or BD-RE discs, which are re-recordable. Blu-ray discs aren't cheap, with 25GB BD-R discs costing around £10 each, and larger capacity 50GB discs around £20. BD-RE discs cost around £20 for 25GB, rising to £25 for a 50GB disc. Buying in bulk brings the cost of discs down significantly, but availability is limited. Specialist online retailers are generally the best bet for a good deal.

If you don't get high-definition broadcasts and simply want to record Freeview, a Best Buy DVD recorder/PVR combination costs less. And if you don't need to save recordings to disc, a twin-tuner Freeview PVR that can record one show while you watch another is a more versatile option.

WHICH.CO.UK

Don't need to archive programmes to disc?

Check out our reviews of the latest PVRs at www.which.co.uk/pvrs



BLU-RAY

Panasonic DMR-BS750EBK £699

Which? test score 73%

PROS This versatile twin-tuner Freesat PVR comes with a 250GB hard drive that gives 105 hours of standard-definition recording, or 37 hours in HD. It incorporates a Blu-ray recorder, and can record in lower quality onto regular DVDs. Our lab testers gave it high marks for its excellent picture and good sound quality. For a complex device, it's reasonably easy to use. The remote control is good, and the electronic programme guide (EPG) is well laid-out and easy to read.

CONS There's no instant pause and rewind feature – you need to activate it first. There's no HDMI (high definition) input and you can't record directly to a disc – first you have to record to the hard drive and then transfer across. The manual is complex and quite daunting.

Full review at www.which.co.uk/dmr-bs750ebk

We found it cheapest at John Lewis
Also available Argos, Currys, Comet

SPECIAL OFFER

Member discounts on Best Buys

Hughes Direct is offering Which? members an exclusive discount on our Best Buy DVD recorders up until 31 December 2009. Members can order the Panasonic DMR-BS750EBK for £529, Panasonic DMR-BS850EBK for £749, Panasonic DMR-EX79EBK for £239, Panasonic

DMR-EX769EBK for £189, and the Panasonic DMR-XS350EBK for £419 (delivery will be £5).

To find out more details about this offer and other member-only discounts from Hughes Direct, log on to www.hughesdirect.co.uk/which or call 01473 321883. This offer is subject to availability.

Contacts

Logik 0844 561 3333 www.dixons.co.uk

LG 0844 847 5454 www.lge.co.uk

Panasonic 0870 535 7357
www.panasonic.co.uk

Samsung 0845 726 7864 www.samsung.com/uk

Sony 08705 111999 www.sony.co.uk



BLU-RAY

Panasonic DMR-BS850EBK £999

Which? test score **72%**

PROS This Blu-ray recorder is similar to the DMR-BS750EBK but comes with a 500GB hard disk drive that gives you 215 hours of conventional recording time or 77 hours in HD. Like its sister model, we found it had excellent picture and good sound quality and is reasonably easy to use.

CONS The pause and rewind feature has to be activated before it can be used and there is no HDMI input. The manual is complex and quite daunting.

Full review at www.which.co.uk/dmr-bs850ebk

We found it cheapest at John Lewis, Comet
Also available Argos, Currys



DVD

Panasonic DMR-EX79EBK £329

Which? test score **72%**

PROS A Freeview PVR/DVD combination with a 250GB hard disk drive providing 110 hours of recording time, plus a DVD recorder for permanent storage. Picture quality is great and sound quality is also good. It's reasonably easy to use, and power use is impressively low, provided you use the eco standby mode.

CONS It has a single Freeview tuner, so is less versatile than twin-tuner PVRs. The on-screen display is rather cramped.

Full review at www.which.co.uk/dmr-ex79ebk

We found it cheapest at John Lewis
Also available Argos, Currys, Comet



DVD

Panasonic DMR-EX769EBK £279

Which? test score **72%**

PROS A good-value Freeview PVR/DVD recorder with a 160GB hard drive providing 70 hours of recording, as well as a DVD recorder. Our experts were impressed with its picture and sound quality. Power use is low if you use the eco standby mode, and it's fairly easy to use, with a well laid-out EPG.

CONS It has only one Freeview tuner. Its alternative Guide Plus+ EPG has adverts, and is more cluttered than the Freeview version.

Full review at www.which.co.uk/dmr-ex769ebk

We found it cheapest at John Lewis
Also available Argos, Currys, Comet, Tesco Direct



DVD

Panasonic DMR-XS350EBK £549

Which? test score **72%**

PROS This twin-tuner Freesat PVR has a 250GB hard drive giving 105 hours of standard-definition recording time or 37 hours in HD. It works as a conventional DVD recorder, too. We rate it highly for its excellent picture and good sound quality. Like our other Best Buys, it's easy to use, with a clear EPG and logical on-screen menus.

CONS It can record in HD, but shows can only be copied onto DVD in SD. There's no instant pause and rewind feature.

Full review at www.which.co.uk/dmr-xs350ebk

We found it cheapest at John Lewis, Comet
Also available Argos

MODEL	SPECIFICATION					WHICH? TEST PERFORMANCE					SCORE (%)
	PRICE (£)	TYPE	TUNER TYPES	RECORDING TIME SD/HD (hrs)	DIGITAL OUTPUT	RECORD/PLAYBACK PICTURE	RECORD/PLAYBACK SOUND	RECORD/PLAYBACK PICTURE (LP)	EASE OF USE	POWER USE	
PANASONIC DMR-BS750EBK	699	BR/PVR	TF	105/37	C, O	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	73
PANASONIC DMR-BS850EBK	999	BR/PVR	TF	215/77	C, O	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	72
PANASONIC DMR-EX79EBK	329	DVDR/PVR	F	110	O	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	72
PANASONIC DMR-EX769EBK	279	DVDR/PVR	F	70	O	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	72
PANASONIC DMR-XS350EBK	549	DVDR/PVR	TF	105/37	C, O	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	72
SONY RDR-GX380	126	DVDR	A	0	C	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	68
SONY RDR-AT100	400	DVDR/HDD	A	68	C	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	67
SAMSUNG DVD-SH893M/XEU	195	DVDR/PVR	A, F	67	O	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	66
SAMSUNG DVD-SH897M/XEU	229	DVDR/PVR	A, F	135	O	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	66
LG RHT497H	230	DVDR/PVR	A, F	84	C, O	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★★	62
LG RHT498H	300	DVDR/PVR	A, F	129	C, O	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★★	62
LOGIK LDVR1608	140	DVDR/PVR	F	74	C, O	★★★	★★★	★★★	★★	★★★	52

USING THE TABLE

The more stars the better.

Specification

Price See p27. **Type** BR = Blu-ray recorder, DVDR = DVD recorder,

HDD = hard disk drive.

Tuner type TF = Twin Freesat, F = Freeview, A = Analogue **Recording time** Hard disk recording time in highest quality. **Digital output** C = coaxial, O = optical.

Test performance

Recorded playback picture/sound Picture and sound quality for programmes the device has recorded. **Recorded playback picture (LP)** For programmes the

device has recorded in long-play mode. **Ease of use** How easy the recorder is to set up and use. **Power use** How much power the recorder uses in standby and when operating.

Score

Ignores price and is based on:

Picture and sound quality **60%**
Ease of use **20%**
Features **10%**
Power use **10%**