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## Review: Denon DVD-1920 multi-format player

15/11/05



High-Definition-ready TVs are pouring out of factories and into homes, even though the availability of HD broadcasts and disc software lags well behind and only starts rolling out extensively during 2006. So, how do you make the most of a new flatscreen TV or projector as well as maximising your existing DVD collection? The answer is an HDMI-equipped player that upscales the output to suit the screen's resolution.

HDMI sockets generally appear on more expensive players, while a few cheaper models have not been powerful enough under the hood to make good use of this new digital AV connection. Denon, however, has taken much of the technology from its high-end players such as the DVD-2910 and DVD-3910 and squeezed it into a smaller, more affordable version. The £250 DVD-1920 looks fairly unassuming at first, with a dark metallic finish and a smattering of buttons. Likewise the remote gives little away, but the plethora of format logos under the display – and a glance at the array of sockets at the back – show that this is no ordinary player.

There's an RGB Scart and S-Video alternative for more basic TVs, as well as analogue component out for normal progressive scan viewing, but it's the tiny HDMI port that's important here. It pipes digital audio and video directly to compatible flatscreens (or an increasing number of projectors and AV amps).

The DVD-1920 also uses the HDMI output for its upscaled output, turning standard DVDs into pseudo-High Definition via the latest edition of Faroudja's DCDi chip. You can boost playback to 720 lines in progressive scan or 1080 lines in interlaced form. The latter can appear sharper, though is not necessarily the best for movies. Even if you don't take it to high-definition heights, the 11-bit/216MHz video digital-to-analogue converter promises a superior performance and, as a bonus, there's built-in DivX compatibility. DivX-format videos are abundant on the internet (if not always with legally sourced content but that's a matter for your conscience). You can take these files, burn them to disc and play them on the Denon, though it doesn't seem to display anamorphic widescreen DivX properly and some playback can be jerky, which may be down to software foibles.

This is also an extremely audio-friendly machine, with playback for common low-res formats such as MP3 (including variable bitrate) and Windows Media Audio. High-res SACD and DVD-Audio titles are also fully supported with 24-bit/192kHz sampling, though you need to connect the analogue 5.1 phonos to a suitable amp to hear these properly.

### Performance

There is nothing to stop you using this player via S-Video or Scart, the old-fashioned way, and the picture quality is fine if that's the best that your TV can cope with. However, to see it at its best you really must connect it to a high-definition TV via the HDMI output. HDMI is much talked about as it goes hand in hand with HDTV. The Denon's progressive scan image through analogue component video is smooth looking and colourful but switching to the pure-digital HDMI option takes things up a notch or two.



But merely having an HDMI or DVI port on a player doesn't guarantee a better picture. It's what the machine does with it that counts and a lot also depends on how the DVD has been encoded. We're pleased to report that the DVD-1920 is both extremely impressive and flexible, especially considering its price. All-digital movies such as *The Incredibles*, *Collateral* and *Sin City* are naturally pristine when delivered this way but a few DVDs can suffer under the scrutiny of an HD screen and a digital video connection. Not so on the Denon.

We have seen increased graininess via HDMI with some films, such as *Pirates Of The Caribbean*, occasionally making the softer analogue output more suitable, but the DVD-1920 makes excessive grain and artefacts practically disappear, allowing the fundamental advantages of HDMI to shine through. Details are sharper, edges are vividly clear and colours seem more powerful and lifelike. The upscaled output works best in 720p mode for movies; video-shot TV material can fare better in 1080i but this mode makes films look slightly artificial.

### Overview:

**Price:** £250

**Website:** [www.denon.co.uk](http://www.denon.co.uk)

**Size:** WxHxD: 43x8x31cm

**Weight:** 2.6kg

**Disc compatibility:** DVD, DVD-A, DVD-R/RW, CD, CD-R/RW, VCD, SVCD, SACD, MP3-VBR, WMA9, JPEG, Kodak Picture CD, DivX v5

**Progressive scan:** PAL/NTSC up to 720p

**Sound:** Dolby Digital, DTS

**Video connections:** Composite out, S-video out, component out, RGB Scart, HDMI (up to 1080i)

**Audio connections:** Scart out, analogue out, 5.1 multichannel, coaxial digital out, optical digital out, HDMI digital out

**Plus points:** Great value; HDMI out; plays all sorts of discs including hi-res audio and DivX

**Minus points:** Not all DivX files play successfully

Given Denon's hi-fi heritage, this deck does not compromise on audio either, whether it's multichannel sound for movies and DVD-A or plain old CDs and compressed low-res formats, of which it's surprisingly forgiving. The DVD-1920 boasts a delicate musical quality, with clear vocals, a rich soundfield and broad dynamic range.

### **Verdict:**

This tremendous value player is no snob because it makes the best of whatever you chuck at it— from heavily compressed recordings to full-resolution formats. The upscaled pictures are not quite as pure as true High Definition but this is one of the best machines at making standard DVDs work better on HDTVs without spending a fortune on extra new kit. If you want to play all sorts of discs equally well, the DVD-1920 is highly recommended.

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