

ON TEST: DENON-DVD2200 Universal DVD player £600 ★★★★★

# Talent show



▲ The handset is a beefy, clearly labelled job



▲ Handling is easy enough - no thanks to the manual, though



▲ Shame it lacks the metallic finish of the top-end model

John Archer takes a look at Denon's new universal DVD player and wonders if it has enough sparkle to make it stand out from the middle ground



Resting in the middle of Denon's new universal DVD range, between the excellent entry-level £400 DVD-1400 and the simply gobsmacking £850 DVD-2900, the heritage of Denon's DVD-2200 speaks for itself.

On the other hand, mid-range products can sometimes prove the hardest sell, appealing neither to the budget-conscious nor to well-heeled folk who simply must have the best of everything at any cost. So can the DVD-2200 really manage to inspire those notoriously hard-to-motivate middle-grounders into money-splashing action?

## DESCRIPTION

Perhaps inevitably, the DVD-2200 doesn't employ anything like the same stunning heavy-duty build quality that the 2900 did. It's much lighter and doesn't boast the 2900's sensational metallic finish, regardless of whether you plump for the silver, black or gold versions.

We shouldn't judge a book by its cover, of course, but it's hard not to be concerned that such an obvious step-down in build quality could have a severe negative impact on the 2200's performance. Let's just hope that this impact isn't ultimately worse than you'd reasonably expect for your £250 saving over the 2900.

The 2200's connections are very satisfactory. There are two main highlights: component video outputs which enable you to enjoy the

deck's Progressive Scan talents on a suitably capable screen; and 5.1 RCA line outs so you can enjoy the full-range benefits of the 2200's DVD-Audio and Super Audio CD playback talents.

There are also the customary RGB-capable Scart, composite video and S-video alternatives, together with both coaxial and optical digital audio options and a pair of dedicated stereo RCA outputs.

The 2200's list of standout features isn't restricted to its DVD-Audio/Super Audio CD and progressive scan capabilities. Enhancing its Universal credentials, for instance, are MP3, WMA and Photo CD playback.

Also useful are 'Darker' and 'Lighter' settings for adjusting the black level according to your screen's capabilities. However, we recommend you take care with this setting, since choosing 'darker' on a low contrast screen can result in the loss of quite a bit of background detail during dark scenes.

We also availed ourselves of handy facilities for tweaking the brightness, contrast, sharpness, gamma and hue components of the picture.

Similarly impressive levels of flexibility are found on the audio side, too. Particular highlights include a bass enhancer and an extremely comprehensive suite of speaker configuration facilities for surround sound music that make the 2200 a friend to just about any

type of speaker/amp system we could think of.

Some of the DVD-2200's internal specs warrant our attention, too. For starters, video circuits are mounted on separate boards in isolation from each other, and the power supply is a discrete design with separate power for the audio, video and digital blocks.

When it comes to video processing, at the 2200's heart are 12-bit/108MHz video DACs, while the progressive scanning is provided by the highly regarded Silicon Image Sil504 chipset.

On the audio front, the 2200 boasts three Burr-Brown 24-bit/192-kHz DSD1791 DACs for decoding PCM and SACD/DSD signals discretely, with no down-conversion of the DSD stream. Furthermore, there's a Pure Direct mode that switches off all video

## WHAT'S GOOD

Top-end performance from a mid-range deck

## WHAT'S BAD

CD playback only average

PICTURE . . . . . ★★★★★  
SOUND . . . . . ★★★★★  
FEATURES . . . . . ★★★★★  
EASE OF USE . . . . . ★★★★★  
VALUE . . . . . ★★★★★

## VERDICT

Rounds out Denon's latest Universal DVD range in style



circuitry to reduce the possibility of electrical interference on your music, and ultra-flexible, separate bass management systems for DVD-A and Super Audio CD.

### OPERATION

Set-up is fairly straightforward, given the relative complexity of some of its features. The onscreen menus are attractively and clearly presented, and the remote control is big and comfortable.

Our only grumbles would be that the instruction manual doesn't do a particularly great job of explaining some of the most complicated features (such as the two different progressive scan modes available) even though they can have quite an impact on performance.

Also, the default Scart output is, bizarrely, composite video, when surely RGB would have made much

more sense. The thought that there could be people out there spending £600 on the DVD-2200 and then through lack of knowledge watching it forever in rubbishy composite video mode is enough to send shudders down the spine...

### PERFORMANCE

However, provided you do use the RGB output or, even better, the component video jacks, Denon's refusal to compromise too far with the 2200 results in yet another exceptional Denon DVD performer. With pictures in particular, the 2200 even runs the award-winning 2900 impressively close.

The most immediate impact comes from the 2200's tremendous richness and solidity. This gives pictures a level of dynamism, depth and cinematic impact that precious few rivals at any price can muster.

What's more, there's almost the same superb fine detail talent as with the 2900, almost the same extensive contrast range, almost as little noise (be it MPEG blocking or electrical), and in progressive mode, seemingly exactly the same fluidity and dearth of jagged edges. Which all adds up to a truly outstanding effort for £600.

The 2200 also knows its onions when it comes to DVD-Audio and Super Audio CD playback. The flavour is perhaps a little smoother than the 2900, meaning you miss out on some of the tiny subtleties in a good multi-channel music mix – but comparisons with the 2900 aren't really fair. Set against similarly priced or cheaper Universal players, the 2200's prowess is clear.

CD playback is the 2200's weakest area, with a few cheaper decks – particularly from Sony – able to deliver more dynamism and sparkle. But even though it's the 2200's weakest point, its CD playback still rates as 'good' by anybody's reckoning.

### CONCLUSION

What this all comes down to is that Denon has, with typical aplomb, completely confounded any doubts we might have had about the 2200. In fact, it's judged this mid-range contender's talents so perfectly that far from not finding an audience, we now think it might actually become the most popular model in Denon's universal range! ■

## SPECIFICATION

### FEATURES

Plays: DVD, DVD-A, DVD-R, DVD+R, DVD+RW, DVD-RW (Video and VR modes), CD, SACD, CD-R, CD-RW, VCD, SVCD, MP3, WMA, JPEG; slow mo; frame advance; x2, x4 zoom; progressive scan; black level adjust; bass enhancer (two channel); speaker size/distance adjust with test tone; Pure Direct audio only mode; SRS TruSurround; pic adjustments with five preset memories; random playback; repeat; repeat A-B; JPEG slide show mode; subtitles; parental lock; bookmarking

### SOCKETS

RGB Scart; component video outputs; 5.1-channel outputs; stereo audio outputs; S-video output; composite video output; multi-room link in/out; coaxial/optical digital audio output

### DIMENSIONS

434(w) x 101(h) x 318(d)mm

### WEIGHT

4.7kg

### TEST DATA

Video jitter: 3ns (very good)  
Signal-to-noise ratio (composite): -72.5dB (good)  
(S-video): -74.7dB (very good)  
Signal-to-noise ratio (component): -75.4dB (very good)  
Chrominance AM/PM: -72.8dB/-62.3dB (excellent/average)  
Chroma crosstalk: -47.8dB (below average)  
Frequency response at 5MHz: (S-video): -0.83dB (very good); (composite): -0.63dB (very good); (component): -0.59dB (very good)  
Audio jitter: 153.0ps (very good)

### CONTACT

☎ 01234 741200  
www.denon.co.uk

### Also consider...

#### DENON DVD-2900

If you can find £250 more, this step-up Denon will reward your extra outlay in spades  
Reviewed: Oct '03

#### PIONEER DV-757Ai

Performs roughly as well as the Denon 2200, but adds a digital link so you can deliver full SACD and DVD-A sound using a single cable to any suitably equipped amp  
Reviewed: Mar '03



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