

MEDIA REPORT



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PAGE OF 1 / 1

Pod-esque styling and an astonishingly sharp image talk the talk, but can this portable video player walk the walk?



KEY FEATURES
 Video record via PAL/NTSC AV-in; recording in MPEG-4 (i-ash) format, 25 fps at 704 x 240; audio recording in MP3 format, 32KHz at 48/96/192 kHz; AV-out in PAL and NTSC formats
VIDEO PLAYBACK DivX 4+ (Luv) 30 fps at 720 x 480, DivX 3.11 (Luv) 30 fps at 352 x 288, Microsoft WMV 9 (Luv) 30 fps at 352 x 288, Apple QuickTime 6 (Luv) 30 fps at 640 x 480
AUDIO PLAYBACK MP3, WMA
IMAGE PLAYBACK JPEG, BMP
CF HARDWARE 7-inch LTPS LCD (6.5-inch viewable), 720 x 480 resolution, 20GB 1.8-inch hard disk
SOFTWARE Manager content management software for Windows
CONNECTIONS USB; AV-in; AV-out; headphone jack
COMPATIBLE WITH Windows XP; Mac; compatibility in generic USB storage device mode
DIMENSIONS W192 x H115 x D29mm

Which makes the relatively modest 20GB capacity of the Toshiba hard disk all the more galling. With your average DivX movie clocking in around 700MB, you're limited to about thirty movies tops. A 40GB version is on the horizon, though.

As for the aesthetic of the DVX-Pod's chassis, the homage paid to Apple's Jonathan Ive-era design ethic is obvious. That's fine if you're still charmed by Apple's best-selling music player. For some, however, the ubiquity of the iPod has bestowed anything from white plastic with a whiff of trailer park trash. Still, we've no quibble regarding build quality; it's a solid unit.

But the best news involves the DVX-Pod's stunning image quality. The LTPS LCD panel is really bright and boasts bags of contrast and a superfine pixel pitch. The result is breathtakingly sharp video playback - it's truly impressive. And yet it's annoying that the unit fails to use the whole screen to display content; there are thin black bars on either side of the display. Mobinote tells us that future revisions will feature an option to stretch the image over the entire screen (there are approximately 50 pixels on either side not currently being used). But be warned: this will be a hardware upgrade not available to existing owners.

The majority of the DivX, QuickTime and WMV9 files we tried played without a hitch, and for the minority that won't,

Mobinote provides a transcoding application that should guarantee almost universal compatibility. Likewise, transferring files from a PC is quick and easy. Synchronisation software is provided, but videos and music can simply be dropped straight on to the device for playback from any PC with a USB connection - drivers are not required.

Once on the device, finding and playing content is about as brain taxing as watching *Teletubbies*. Sadly, its features are about as rudimentary as *Laa-Laa* and *Po's* activities, too. There's no facility for queuing up video content and you can't browse playlists while listening to music. Similarly, while the video capture function produces reasonable results in terms of quality, there's no scheduling options whatsoever; it's simply play or record. But battery life is reasonable - between three and four hours.

It's the same story with every personal video player yet: enticing, but ultimately flawed and far from perfect. Come on Apple, show them how it's done! **JL**

DIGITAL HOME ★★★★★

For Breathtaking screen; good codec support; simple to use
 Against Too big; limited storage capacity; rudimentary playback and record options

Verdict Delivers unparalleled image quality. Nearly fabulous, but size, cost and limited functionality disappoint.

Portable Video Player

Mobinote DVX-Pod 7010

Desperate for Apple to release a video iPod? Don't fancy the Windows-based PMC alternative? Then the Mobinote DVX-Pod might be just the ticket

Portable video: It's the next big thing. So far, though, pocket-sized video players have remained unflinchingly underwhelming. The small, low resolution displays typically on offer do a resoundingly good job of defeating the purpose of these devices - that is, enjoying video on the move. Of course, the latest generation of high resolution PDAs certainly deliver impressive image quality. But have you tried watching a full length feature film on a 3.5-inch PDA screen? It's far from ideal.

But what if there was a portable video player with a large, high definition screen that was capable of playing your existing library of digital video files without conversion? A player that could not only

display full DVD quality video, but capture it too, and output to almost any TV? We give you the

Mobinote DVX-Pod 7010. On paper, it delivers all that, and more.

The headline specifications are impressive: a seven-inch, 720 x 480 pixel LCD display; support for a wide range of popular video formats and codecs including MPEG-4, DivX, WMV9 and QuickTime;

video output to both PAL and NTSC TV sets and high quality video capture to MPEG-4. Bung in support for both MP3 and WMA audio playback, as well as photo viewing and voice recording, and you'll find yourself with all the ingredients for a killer mobile multimedia device.

If that's the theory from Mobinote, what's the DVX-Pod like in practice? Well, any attempt at truly pocket-sized portability must have been unceremoniously thrown out of the window early on in its development because this thing is big. The screen bezel and inch-dee frame make this about as pocketable as the *Complete Works of Shakespeare*.



TESTED WITH...
ICE AGE
 Computer-rendered content such as Fox's *Ice Age* is extraordinarily clear and crisp, but the DVX-Pod's screen handles live action footage just as well. The earthy, dusty tones in cut hit *Memento* look fabulously natural.

Price £395
See it www.mobinote.com.tw
Buy it www.designrevision.co.uk

CONNECT TO SHARP DV-HR300H. Reviewed this issue, page 43

