



High-definition no longer means a high price when it comes to Blu-ray players, writes **Stephen Fenech**

# High five



2

**Sony BDP-S760**

\$649

Ph: 13 76 69, sony.com.au

★★★★★

3

**Panasonic DMR-BW750**

\$1429

Ph: 13 26 00, panasonic.com.au

★★★★★

4

**Kogan KGNBD2A**

\$199

Ph: 1300 304 292, kogan.com.au

★★★★★

5

**Toshiba BDX2000KY**

\$329

Ph: 13 30 70, toshiba.com.au

★★★★★

Blu-ray players can deliver a cinema-like experience with Full-HD video and amazing audio. Sony's BDP-S760 offers both with true 24-frames-per-second playback, so what you're seeing at home is just as the director intended. Also built into the BDP-S760 are video-processing technologies called HD Reality Enhancer and x.v.Color to improve the colour and clarity of the picture and upscale DVDs to near HD quality. The device's wi-fi connectivity makes accessing BD Live content from the net easy for those who don't have a connection next to the TV, and a USB port provides space for extra memory.

The Blu-ray format allows up to 50GB of information on each disc, which is why a HD movie, improved audio and extra features can be crammed on to one disc. That also makes it desirable recording real estate and is why Panasonic created this Blu-ray disc recorder with twin HD tuners. Users can record up to 84 hours of content on a dual-layer Blu-ray disc or 441 hours to its internal, 250GB hard drive. This capable Blu-ray player has full-HD video output, support for HD audio and BD Live. An SD card slot features, as does a USB terminal for viewing saved content or downloading to its hard drive.

Kogan mixes it with the more expensive brands with the KGNBD2A Blu-ray player. Its impressive list of features starts with Full-HD video resolution and upscaling DVDs to HD quality. The player offers 7.1-channel audio and support for digital sound formats including Dolby Digital Plus, Dolby True DTS, DTS HD and DTS-HD Master Audio. Loading time, which seemed an eternity with first generation Blu-ray players, is impressive with Blu-ray disc menus appearing in less than a minute. It has BD Live compatibility to access features from the internet, and a USB port to view photos and videos from a thumb drive.

Toshiba is a relative newcomer to Blu-ray after initially supporting its HD rival. Its first model, the BDX2000KY, comes to the party with BD Live, Full-HD video and compatibility with popular audio formats. One of the strengths of this player is video upscaling that makes DVDs look better than ever using technology Toshiba developed during the HD format war. An included SD card slot makes it easy to display photos and video on an HD screen and even listen to music. One of the only weaknesses of the BDX2000KY is its slow loading times for Blu-ray movies which, in some cases, took more than two minutes.

## IN THE PICTURE

# TECHSPERT

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### How to: Store digital photos

STORING photos used to be so easy. You would gather your photo prints and, being careful not to leave fingerprints, place them in a photo album.

But because most photographs are now digital files, this process has become a lot more complicated.

The new breed of photographer is taking more snapshots than ever, but these photos often remain trapped on memory cards or inside computer hard drives, both of which are not foolproof options for safekeeping.

There are two ways to better safeguard these new memories: digitally or in print.

Hard drives have moving parts and, over time, are prone to failure. For this reason, it's important to save your photographs on more than one hard drive, on an internet service or on to blank DVDs.

Adding photos to an additional hard drive is an easy way to save your photos, and it's a practice that is becoming less expensive. A one-terabyte drive (1000GB) can cost less than \$150 and can hold extensive photo galleries.

Alternatively, you could upload your photos to a website as a back-up. Photo websites including Flickr and Picasa will let you upload some photos and videos free, but additional storage is available. Flickr offers unlimited photo storage for \$US24.95 per year, whereas Google's Picasa service charges \$US5 a year for 20GB of space.

Burning your photos to blank DVDs is perhaps one of the safest storage methods, though it could also be one of the most time-consuming given that a standard DVD will only store 4.7GB of data. Similarly, you could leave your photos on their memory card and store them away from the elements.

Printing digital photos is also an effective method of safeguarding your memories, just as it has been for decades.

Traditional photo shops such as Rabbit Photo and Kodak Express can print photos from discs or memory cards, as can several larger retailers, including Big W, Kmart, Harvey Norman and Officeworks.

If you don't want to enter a retail store, some Australian websites will let you upload photos and order prints and other photo products online. Sites including Snapfish and Momento let users create and order photo books, calendars and more, and Apple Australia allows its iPhoto users to do the same from within the image program.

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## TV CABLE

# HELPDESK

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**Q. I bought a flatscreen TV and was told to buy a special \$90 cable for better picture quality. I didn't and the picture quality is acceptable but not as good watching Foxtel as with free-to-air HD channels. Do I need this cable?**

**A.** The cable the retailer was referring to was probably a High Definition Multimedia Interface or HDMI cord. This type of cable was designed to deliver high-definition signals because it transmits them in an uncompressed format, so you don't lose any of the detail. For this reason, they do deliver a better signal to your TV screen and the difference is clear to see. It's worth shopping around to find a good price on an HDMI cord.