

Azur plays it all - with assurance



For the money you won't find a player out there that does what the Cambridge player does so well

UNIVERSAL
BLU-RAY PLAYER
CAMBRIDGE AUDIO
AZUR 650BD



€ 799,00

↑ for

Sturdily Finished extravagantly specified; impressive cross-format performance

↓ Against

Not quite the best Blu-ray pictures 799 can buy

→ Verdict

The ongoing clamour for an affordable universal disc player addressed in some style

ENTHUSIASTIC ADOPTERS OF new technology often have a number of players knocking about, what with Blu-ray, CD, HDCD, SACD, DVD and DVD-Audio discs to enjoy. Cambridge Audio wants to put an end to your multiple box/extravagant power consumption misery with the Azur 650BD.

As well as all the formats, the 650BD will handle eight-channel decoding of all high-def audio, and packs 1GB of memory for BD-Live access, and two USB 2.0

"All aspects of home cinema performance are compelling"

inputs. The casework is hefty, the remote comprehensive (though unlit and a plasticky imitation of the original metal Azur Navigator) and the on-screen menus crisp and coherent. Only the lack of wireless

connectivity (the ethernet port is for wired connection only) prevents a nap hand.

Blu-ray performance impresses. The 650BD loads discs a sight faster than most - *The Dark Knight* was

"The even-handedness and musicality make it especially enjoyable"

ready to go in around 20 seconds. And the lustrous colour palette, bright contrasts, smooth edge definition, assured motion handling and torrential levels of detail are admirable. A scene combining complex patterns with slow panning can provoke a smattering of picture noise, but, set against everything the 650BD does well that's almost a gratuitous complaint.

Other aspects of home cinema performance are just as compelling. Whether sending undecoded audio to a receiver via HDMI or taking care of

high-def soundtracks on board, the 650BD sounds punchy, expansive and exciting, with nicely judged bite at the top end and a richly articulate midrange. It upscales DVD to 1080p with few alarms and makes the most of Dolby Digital or DTS sound.

DVD-Audio and SACD sound clean, dynamically potent and spacious. It's even-handedness and musical presentation that makes the 650BD's especially enjoyable here.

Even stereo CD playback isn't badly compromised - a degree more focus wouldn't go amiss, but, for detail retrieval and midrange eloquence, this has little real competition.

The 650BD may not be a 'universal' player in the way the E 4500 Marantz UD9004 is (it's not a master of every format it can play), but its price and competitive performance make it one of the most capable affordable disc-spinners around.