

CD DRIVES AND DVD WRITERS

CD drives												
Details	Last month's position	First reviewed	Price (ex VAT)	Warranty	Interface type	Data buffer size	Average access time	Read/write/rewrite speed	CD-R software	Dimensions (width x depth x height)	Packet-writing software	
1 Asus CRW-4816A 0870 429 3220 www.asus.com	1	Oct 02	£69	1-year	EIDE	2MB	100ms	48x/48x/16x	Ahead Nero 5.5	149x198x42mm	InCD	
2 Teac CD-W540EK 020 8906 9111 www.microwarehouse.co.uk	2	Jul 02	£83	2-year	EIDE	8MB	72ms	40x/40x/12x	Easy CD Creator	146x192x42mm	DirectCD	
3 Cyber Drive CW078D 01256 707 070 www.cyberdrive.de	3	Oct 02	£70	1-year	EIDE	2MB	100ms	48x/40x/16x	Ahead Nero 5.5	146x192x42mm	InCD	
4 LG GCE-8400B 0870 607 5544 www.lge.co.uk	4	Jul 02	£79	2-year	EIDE	2MB	100ms	40x/40x/12x	Ahead Nero 5.5	146x185x41mm	InCD	
5 Cyber Drive CW058D 01256 707 070 www.cyberdrive.de	5	May 02	£62	1-year	EIDE	2MB	100ms	48x/32x/10x	Ahead Nero 5.5	149x207x43mm	InCD	

DVD writers												
Details	Last month's position	First reviewed	Price (ex VAT)	Warranty	Drive type	Interface type	Data buffer size	CD-RW read/write/rewrite speeds	DVD read/write/rewrite speed	Average access times	Burning software	
1 Ricoh MP5125A-DP 020 8261 4031 www.ricoh-uk.com	1	Oct 02	£298	2-year	DVD+R/ DVD+RW/CD-RW	EIDE	2MB	32x/12x/10x	8x/2.4x/2.4x	140ms	Ahead Nero 5.5	
2 Philips DVDRW228 0800 896 324 www.philips.com/pcstuff	2	Oct 02	£323	2-year	DVD+R/ DVD+RW/CD-RW	EIDE	2MB	32x/12x/10x	8x/2.5x/2.5x	140ms	Ahead Nero 5.5	
3 Sony DRX-120L 0800 2623 7669 www.sonyisstorage.com	3	Oct 02	£347	1-year	DVD+R/ DVD+RW/CD-RE	external FireWire	2MB	32x/12x/10x	8x/2.4x/2.4x	140ms	Recorder Gold	
4 Pioneer DVR-A04 01753 789 500 www.pioneer-eur.com	4	Oct 02	£275	1-year	DVD-RW/ DVD-RW/CD-RW	EIDE	2MB	24x/8x/4x	6x/2x/1x	200ms	VOB Instant CD/DVD	
5 HP DVD200i 08705 474 747 www.hp.com/uk	5	Oct 02	£340	1-year	DVD+R/ DVD+RW/CD-RW	EIDE	2MB	32x/12x/10x	8x/2.4x/2.4x	125ms	HP RecordNow	

All CD-R and CD-RW test media supplied by Imation (www.imationtd.co.uk)

CD DRIVES

1 **Asus CRW-4816A**

Offering incredible 48-/48-/16-speed (read/write/rewrite) facilities, the CRW-4816A is the fastest drive we've seen to date. The superb burst of speed is partly because the Asus writes to CD-R discs using advanced Partial-CAV technology, which reads the outer part of the disc at a different speed to the inner, preventing errors piling up. With such innovation on board the Asus sliced through previous records, burning a 350MB CD-R in two minutes one second. CD-RW performance was equally impressive, taking just under three and a half minutes. Considering this wealth of technology, you'd expect the Asus to be expensive. However, with a price tag of just £69, it's one of the best CD-RW deals yet.

DVD WRITERS

1 **Ricoh MP5125A-DP**

Combining the multiple-use DVD+RW format with the cheaper write-once DVD+R, the Ricoh MP5125A-DP offers up to 2.4-speed write and rewrite facilities. The resulting discs are compatible with many standalone DVD players. Ahead's Nero software package is bundled with the Ricoh and draws praise for its clear user interface, high success rate and unfettered speed. Although the MP5125A-DP finished second to the Philips, the difference between the two rarely amounted to more than five seconds. CD burning was also well tuned. The Ricoh's sub-£300 price tag, strong software bundle and top performance proves that it is the Best Buy for aspiring DVD writers.

CD DRIVES

2 **Teac CD-W540EK**

The Teac combines high performance and quiet operating speed. Indeed, it's only the CD-W540EK's high price tag that prevents it from taking the top spot. The Fine Focus control keeps the laser perfectly positioned despite the spinning speed, while the Intelligent Speed Control monitors every CD to determine the quickest writing speed possible without risking errors. In operation these measures work beautifully and the Recommended Teac copied CD-Rs and CD-RWs without missing a beat.

3 **Cyber Drive CW078D**

On paper the CW078D is the second fastest drive in the chart, matching the Teac's 40-speed CD-R facilities while bettering its rewrite capabilities to 16-speed. In truth, though, the Cyber Drive couldn't match Teac's sophisticated technology. Buffer underruns are dealt with effectively, but it offers little else in the way of cutting-edge features.

4 **LG GCE-8400B**

Unfortunately for LG, the GCE-8400B's 40-speed CD-R and 12-speed CD-RW capabilities have now been surpassed. It also lacks innovative features – there are no advanced writing controls or support for Mount Rainier (CD-MRW), for example, while the 2MB data buffer is standard. Having said that, the LG is still a reliable and competent performer.

5 **Cyber Drive CW058D**

The CW058D may be the cheapest drive here, but its specification falls short of the rivals. The 32-speed recording rate is slow, however you get decent 12-speed rewrite and 48-speed read facilities. In our tests it managed to keep the other drives within sight without pushing up the error rate.

DVD WRITERS

2 **Philips DVDRW228**

On paper, the Philips' 2.5-speed rating places it ahead of the glut of 2.4-speed drives. In practice, the Philips notched up the best times in our tests. The DVDRW228 was efficient, porting 3GB of data to DVD+RW in 17 minutes 41 seconds and generating a 350MB CD-RW in four minutes 53 seconds. Besides the standard buffer underrun protection, Philips keeps errors to a minimum with the help of Thermo-Balanced Writing, which adapts the method of burning to suit the type of media.

3 **Sony DRX-120L**

The DRX-120L is the only external device here, so if you need a portable DVD writer then Sony's FireWire interface will prove invaluable. The absence of an interface card means that you'll need to have a FireWire port on your PC, but the relevant cabling is included and the software gets you up to speed. The Sony's performance is strong and in testing it came close to matching the Philips. This may be the most expensive drive here, but compared to the usual pricing of external models, the premium is small.

4 **Pioneer DVR-A04**

Pioneer is sticking to the more traditional DVD-R/RW standard and the DVR-A04's shortcomings are obvious from one look at the chart. Whereas the other drives achieve write and rewrite rates of 2.4- or 2.5-speed, the Pioneer struggles to a meagre dual- and single-speed. The 12-/10-speed CD-R/RW facilities are similarly underspecified.

5 **HP DVD200i**

Accompanied by a raft of manuals and CDs, setting up the HP DVD200i is painless. Its spec also competes with the best, running from its 2.4-speed DVD+R/+RW facilities up to the 2MB buffer and error protection technology. However, the HP is hampered by a cumbersome software bundle.

For all your CD and DVD drives log on to www.BenQ.co.uk

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