



Plextor PX-740A

**PC PRO
A LIST**

PRICE £39 (£45 inc VAT)

SUPPLIER www.dabs.com/uk (code: 3RPRD1)

VERDICT The PX-740A crossed the dual-layer finish line streets ahead of the rest, and its PlexTools software easily justifies the extra pounds. A superb drive.

A look at the performance scores will give you an idea of the Plextor's dominance this month, but even these don't do it justice. Quite simply, this drive is astonishingly fast. Not necessarily in the CD tests, where it placed in the top three, or in single-layer DVD performance, where it made the top five, but cast your eyes over the DVD+R dual-layer graph and you'll see why it topped the class overall for performance.

Burning an 8.5GB dual-layer disc at an average speed of 7.5x, the Plextor finished a full ten minutes before the second-placed Samsung, and half an hour ahead of its slowest competitors. If you're likely to use a lot of dual-layer discs,

there isn't anything in the same league, as it takes only a little over 15 minutes to burn one. Incredibly, it will finish burning a dual-layer disc just 15 seconds slower than its own DVD+RW time. As with many of the models on test, the performance varied with the brand of media used. With a Verbatim disc, the Plextor successfully hit 8x, but when using Memorex it didn't fare so well, so it's worth trying a few brands before you stock up.

When not wowing us with its dual-layer speeds, it still managed to impress, with a DVD+R time of five minutes, 42 seconds being the highlight. If it had a weakness, it was in burning rewritable discs where it

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couldn't quite keep up with the Samsung or the Lite-On. However, in all other formats, it held its own and the gap between them was hardly noticeable overall.

The Plextor is the dearest of the non-LightScribe models, but at £45 (including VAT) it can hardly be called expensive. For this price, you get support for both dual-layer formats and 8x DVD+RW performance when the discs catch up, plus an EIDE cable to make installation a painless process.

A basic Nero suite is supplied, with Nero Express and MediaPlayer, complemented by Pinnacle Instant CD/DVD and the useful Instant Audio, Copy and Backup utilities. But the icing on the cake is Plextor's very own PlexTools Professional, a fantastic utility that allows you to tweak pretty much anything and everything, from the tray eject speed to the accuracy of the burning process.

This software alone more than justifies the few extra pounds you'll be spending, and the drive's short length means it caters for small-form-factor PCs as well. With such incredible performance at a decent price, the Plextor is a worthy Labs Winner.

PC PRO RATINGS

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES & DESIGN	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★
OVERALL	★★★★★