



# Panasonic NVGS400B



**PRICE** £879 (£1,033 inc VAT)

**SUPPLIER** [www.pixmania.co.uk](http://www.pixmania.co.uk)

**VERDICT** The NVGS400B has all bases covered, with superb video performance, a comprehensive feature set and high-resolution stills. You pay a premium for the quality, though.

**P**anasonic's NVGS400B costs considerably less than most camcorders aimed at the semi-professional, but it's housed in the more sizeable 'handycam'-style form factor, rather than the pocket format of its siblings.

Like Sony's DCR-HC1000, the NVGS400B uses three 1/4.7in CCDs, each one offering a 1.07-megapixel resolution. However, even with this semi-professional model, the main benefit of the extra pixels is for photography. Panasonic combines the three CCDs together, throws in some interpolation, and ends up with 4-megapixel stills at a resolution of 2,288 x 1,728. Not surprisingly, the end result is comparable with a standalone digital camera. Sony's DCR-PC350, with its



true 3-megapixel CCD, achieved even better results though.

When it comes to shooting video, the NVGS400B was unbeaten in this Labs, although Sony's DCR-HC1000 is on a par. Colour and detail were superb both indoors and out, with accurate exposure. The Panasonic coped particularly well with low light, continuing to do a good job of representing colours accurately. We saw no edge bleeding at all under any lighting condition, and the slight overburn evident with the lesser models in the range was also absent.

The feature set is the most comprehensive on test. There's a luxurious 3.5in LCD panel to help set up shots. The lens ring is flexible, too. You can use it for manual focus, but at the press of a switch it also provides an alternative zoom control. Another switch temporarily

converts its function to shutter priority or aperture control. Beneath that is a separate button for white balance as well.

Underneath the LCD are some more discrete buttons. One of these switches to 16:9 widescreen and 'Pro-Cinema', which is another 16:9 mode but with 25 progressively scanned frames per second rather than the usual 50 interlaced fields. A further letterbox mode is hidden in the menu system. There are also buttons for the Colour Night View, Soft Skin and Tele/Macro modes. One feature that doesn't have its own button is the manual audio control. This can be accessed only via the menu, which isn't as convenient as the Canon MVX25i's menu wheel control. However, this is our only real criticism of the NVGS400B, and it's hardly a major one. With a top-loading tape mechanism, powered shoe, microphone and headphone jacks, no semi-professional feature is found wanting.

And this is where the NVGS400B is squarely aimed: at the semi-professional and enthusiast. You pay for the privilege, but with stunning picture quality and every important feature included, it's worth the extra money.

## PC PRO RATINGS

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