

**Key Features**

- ❑ DVD-Audio, DVD-Video, CD, CD-R(W), MP3, Kodak Picture CD playback
- ❑ NTSC and Pal progressive scan
- ❑ Component video outputs
- ❑ 96kHz/24-bit D/A converter
- ❑ Crystal six-channel 24-bit/192kHz audio DAC
- ❑ Six 54MHz/12-bit video DACs
- ❑ Low resonance, acoustically-damped chassis

**Connections**

- ❑ Component video output
- ❑ RGB Scart output
- ❑ S-Video output
- ❑ Composite video output
- ❑ 5.1-channel audio outputs
- ❑ Stereo analogue audio outputs
- ❑ Coaxial digital audio output
- ❑ Optical digital audio output

**Dimensions**

- ❑ 100(h) x 310(d) x 430(w)mm

**£230**

# Cambridge Audio Azur 540D

Multichannel DVD-Audio playback at this price? Dominic Dawes is bowled over

**C**AMBRIDGE AUDIO HAS LONG BEEN A STALWART OF the affordable hi-fi market, and with the new Azur range the company aims to improve dramatically on previous efforts. Happily, judging by the 540D DVD-Video/Audio player, this attempt has been a stunning success.

The first-time buyer may wonder what all the fuss is about. Okay, the 540D offers an extremely impressive array of features and connections, but the price is a little more than many people on a tight budget might want to spend. So why should you buy this over one of the many simple movie spinners available for half the price?

Several reasons. For starters, let's hold that price tag in mind while we examine the 540D's standard of design and build quality. It's extremely solid with superb casework, exuding a sense of rigidity that would not be out of place on a player costing three times as much. The disc tray is also very sturdy and quick to respond to the remote, which is also unbelievably good for a sub-£300 player.

Under that impressive shell, the 540D hides some equally mouthwatering gizmos, including a six-channel Crystal CS4360

## "The Azur is an absolute stunner"

DAC (digital-to-analogue converter) to do the audio number crunching, as well as six 54MHz/12-bit video DACs. The 540D supports both PAL and NTSC progressive scan, delivered through its component video outputs.

And then there's DVD-Audio: the 540D also carries full 5.1 channel outputs through which it delivers the new format in full,

### What we like about this DVD player

- Superb build and finish
- Outstanding performance
- Great value

### What we don't like about this amp

- Not universal
- That's it!

high-resolution surround sound. Now, there probably aren't many of you with much music in DVD-Audio form yet, and even fewer who want to scrap their CD collections and start again with a whole new type of disc. So what, you might ask, is the point of DVD-Audio?

A player such as the Azur 540D answers that question. Put it this way: it's worth the money (and then some) as a straight DVD-Video player, sounds remarkably decent as a CD deck, and also offers you another option, gratis,

as it were. So if you fancy hearing your latest musical purchase in its pristine surround mix, you can do that as well, without ditching any discs or even spending any considerable extra money.

You may be getting the impression that we like this player a lot. Of course, there's always the chance that impressive design won't add up to great performance, but the Azur 540D lives up to its billing with authority and style. In DVD-video mode, it offers an excellent performance: picture quality is both stable and insightful, with impressive depth of field and a focused grasp of small details

and fast motion in *Pirates Of The Caribbean*. The colour palette is also spot-on, finding an excellent balance between realistic flesh tones and vivid colours in *Spider-Man*. So, the 540D is a very fine DVD player for the money.

But test it with a selection of DVD-Audio discs (go on, you know you want to) and its performance just gets better. Play the DVD-Audio release of *The Marvin Gaye Collection* and the clarity, dynamics and detail of the 540D come to the fore.

For build, looks and performance, the Azur 540D is an absolute stunner. While its price tag weighs a tad heavier than the real bargain basement products on the market, the quality of design and performance on offer here make this player a hell of a bargain. Check it out.



## Essential Home Cinema Verdict

### Cambridge Audio 540D

Sales 020 7940 2240

Web [www.cambridgeaudio.com](http://www.cambridgeaudio.com)**REMOTE CONTROL**

Most players at this price could be forgiven for ordinary remotes, but this Cambridge control is a revelation. Elegant, solid and stylish, it earns our highest approval.

<b>EASE OF USE</b>	★★★★★
<b>LOOKS</b>	★★★★★
<b>FEATURES</b>	★★★★★
<b>PICTURE</b>	★★★★★
<b>SOUND</b>	★★★★★
<b>VALUE</b>	★★★★★

**VERDICT** For build, looks and performance this is a stunning player at the price. If you're after excellent DVD-Audio married to fine pictures, put this on your shortlist.

**Overall** ★★★★★

**BEST RIVALS**

Pioneer DV-565A ★★★★★

Sony DVP-NS930V

Harman Kardon DVD30

