

Mizuda 331K DVD player

Chinese gold in silver By Max Christoffersen

Mizuda 331K DVD Player. \$149

I couldn't resist it. It was one of those impulse things that you just know would sound good over a drink somewhere.

So I did it. I bought some cat food with my DVD player. Yep I handed over the EFTPOS card and paid \$149 for my Mizuda DVD player and \$1.95 for some cat food for the strays down the alley on the way home.

I walked home chuckling to myself as I wondered which had the longer life, the food or the player? I guess I was trying to laugh it off. I mean how good or bad could a Foodtown DVD player really be?

"At least I've got some cat food," I thought.

Paint me a cynic or maybe just a tightwad. I thought I'd just purchased a cheap piece of Chinese junk that would probably just be an amusing night's entertainment as cheap expectations met even cheaper performance head on.

Well eat humble cat food. The Mizuda stack at Foodtown may be one player short now but the company has got a big time advocate from this customer.

This player may sound cheap, look funny and have a price point to make you think it must be made from cast-offs from other manufacturers, but the real world hands-on fact is this player is a revelation.

The first thing that caught my interest was the claim on the side of the box of 'progressive scan'. The truth is, I thought this was the Mizuda marketing team's hyperbole for a search function. But no – it really is outputting a

'32K' progressive signal on both PAL and NTSC source material. And – it's not bad either with nary a scan light in sight!

Second on the hit list was the very rare and much sought after (by some)



VGA port making connections to older CRT projectors or TVs with RGB inputs oh-so-simple. It also has component video output and RGB output via RCA sockets as well. So no matter which way you go with this Mizuda - you've covered. Last on the list was the Karaoke function, but well, I guess different strokes...

Sonically the Mizuda decodes both DTS and DD, while also offering CD playback through a 96-kHz/24-Bit D/A converter. What isn't clear from the packaging or from the website description is the vast array of on-board controls and settings for sound EQ, image control (contrast, brightness, sharpness) and soundfield generation.

And the component video image upscaled through a quality video processor is extraordinary in detail, colour rendition and stability. The VGA upscaled progressive output is soft but still acceptable at this price point - and yes, it does do PAL progressive.

The Mizuda 331K will also play Kodak Picture, MP3, DVD-RW CD R/W and all zone DVDs as well. And all this with no sign (so far) of Macrovision.

But wait there is more. The remote allows a range of search, slow and EQ controls among other useful buttons that switch from progressive output to standard and component to RGB. The one thing lacking is a stand-by button but that might be asking just too much. OH! - and watch that draw it comes at you quick!

After feeding the cats and walking home with my cheapy box in hand I quickly put the machine into action playing some CDs though the digital coax output to my Yamaha A-1.

Expecting a budget sound from a budget transport, I got a full bodied sound that made my ears prick up immediately.

A stack of CDs quickly mounted up as I played with my budget beast with a

wide and ever growing grin appearing on my face.

Could it be that this really is the player that could do it all?

Despite some disc drive noises on some DVDs and one disc it wouldn't read (until it was cleaned), the Mizuda has eclipsed expectations and made me a believer that the real benefits of globalisation are making their way into audio.

And I think I know why; China wants a piece of the action. Chinese management and overall approach to consumer electronics is well ahead of the lazy corporates we have come to know with familiar Japanese names.

In short, 'Made in China' is no longer an anecdote for junk and in future will be representative of innovative electronics at non-brand name price points. The Mizuda is simply the first of many.

At the end of my introduction to this piece of silver wrapped gold, the conclusion is sometimes you don't get what you pay for. You get more. Or in short excellent audio and video that belies its supermarket status.

And with many first time DVD buyers picking up a Mizuda along with the cabbage, the coffee and *The Listener*, they probably don't know just how good this machine is.

Fact is, the Mizuda is the best bang for the buck DVD player I've seen or heard. And you know what – I may just pick up another one when I go back for the kitty litter tonight.

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