

## MINIDISC PLAYERS

### Sharp MT877, \$829

★★★  
THE designers clearly went into a caffeine-fuelled sleek-and-sexy spasm, rendering many of the buttons so small you need an electron microscope to find the damn things. With its own recharging dock and comprehensive recording features, we're sure this sounds like angels heralding the Second Coming, but sadly the la-di-da nickel-hydride battery was flat, so we've no idea. [What, and you didn't think to put in a new one? Eric, you're an idiot - Ed]

### Sony MZ-R900, \$799

★★★★★  
PART of Sony's continuing quest to reduce everything to sub-atomic size, this tiny silver marvel is still brainy enough to do all the recording you want, at whatever compression. Jog-lever controls make the whole thing easy, even for the huge blundering paws of a RALPH reviewer, while sound quality is full and smoother than a greased lounge lizard.

### Sharp MT80WS, \$389

★★★★  
A GOOD mid-range effort, it's cute - except for the ugly great battery capsule strapped to the roof. It's like stacking girders on a Porsche Boxster. Sound reproduction is slightly artificial, but it's helped by a triple bass-boost facility. The recording and editing process is simple, although there's no long-play capability.

### JVC XM-R-700SL, \$829

★★★★★  
A BIT too feature-heavy for such a small square - finding your way around it can be a chore. But this is a minor problem: the sound quality is faultless, even in long-play, and shaking it like a fool brings not a single skip. The sound quality gets a bit dull and flat at double-long-play, but if you try and stuff a grand piano into your pocket, you can expect to lose a few keys.



A



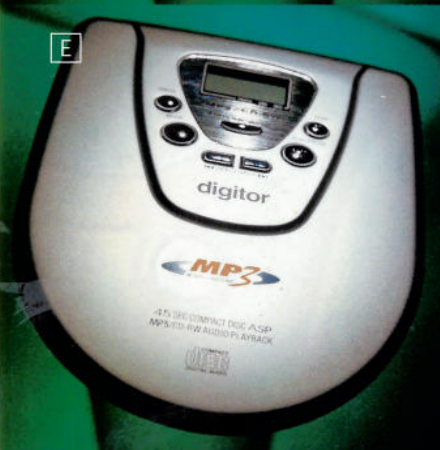
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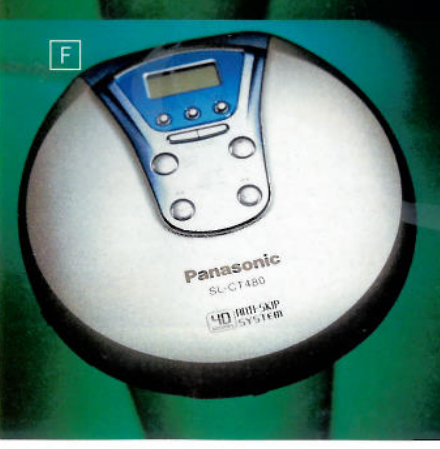
C



D



E



F

## Headphones

ALL players were tested using Sony's MDR-Q33LP stereo headphones: an affordable, full-on aural experience that clip over your ears and make the skinniest sounds phat. Well, better, anyway. \$59.95, call Sony on 1300 137 669



## CD PLAYERS



### A Sony D-SJ15, \$369

★★★★★  
THIS "Sports Walkman" has so much protection, it practically comes with three boofy blokes with shoulder holsters. You'll go through an SAS obstacle course, but Enya keeps right on playing. Sound quality's a touch harsh, but the double bass boost rounds it out nicely. A hand-strap for joggers seems optimistic for something this heavy.

### B Panasonic SL-CT580, \$329

★★★★★  
AT THE top end of the range, Panasonic has axed the AA batteries for flat rechargeables. The result is about the size and weight of a piece of toast, but sexier, if that's possible. Great sound, a cute remote, mountain-steady anti-shock and even a "live" setting for that mini-mosh on the train to work.

### C Philips AX5003, \$219

★★★  
GIVEN a decent shaking, the "jog-proof" Philips skips about like Heidi chased by hornets across a field of nettles. The anti-shock facility helps a lot, but it is still a bit upset when bounced off things. The sound is a little thin, but to compensate the upper notch on the bass boost blows your eardrums into your skull.

### D Kenwood DPC-MP922, \$499

★★  
SO BIG and chunky you need a ladder to open it, this combination CD/MP3 player still produces a sound with more treble than the Vienna Boys' Choir singing a Bee Gees medley in a helium wind tunnel. To be fair, though, the bass boost gives it a good kick in the arse. Comes with a car adaptor kit, but doesn't everything, these days?

### E Digiton A5547, \$228

★★  
A SUMO wrestler with a jockey's voice, the chunky Digiton might be a multi-formatted wonder (MP3/CDR/CDRW), but the thin tones aren't helped by a bass boost that sounds like someone next door dragging heavy furniture. The anti-shock function doesn't like the rough stuff much and there is some distortion at high volume.

### F Panasonic SL-CT480, \$239

★★★★★  
TRYING to be Calista Flockhart with a Barry White rear end, this is too skinny for the AA batteries, so the flimsy port can't close properly. Before you get too upset, though, the sound quality's full and warm, and the 40-second skip-proofing resists more violent motion than a Maracas Anonymous meeting.