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Nero ShowTime

It's ShowTime

Nero's more than a DVD player

Everybody knows that though HD-DVD and Blu-ray video quality is out on the market the most common and comfortable format users employ is still good old DVD. The tools for playing this type of video are numerous on the Internet and many of them are absolutely free. That if you are not looking for a myriad of options you rarely think of using. Otherwise there is always the solution of the two best DVD players on the market, [WinDVD](#) and [PowerDVD](#), which provide a very nice set of options for adjusting video and audio as well as comfortably navigating from one chapter to another. Nero's latest ShowTime is also a neat option in playing DVDs and there is no need in wasting money on other software if you are the owner of the entire suite (Nero 7 Premium Reloaded or Nero 8 Ultra). The latest version of the player has visible changes, but the greatest modifications are cosmetic. There are however some new options available, but not too many. With a redesigned interface, Nero ShowTime comes with new skins (Brushed Metal and Ice) besides the default one, Red Plastic and White Acrylic. Other than this the application has smoother lines, in conformity with Windows Vista and everything looks more appealing. The same two-piece structure is preserved for video window and play controls so you will have two windows cramping your taskbar, just like in the previous version. As I see it play controls window resembles an awful lot with [PowerDVD's](#) as moving forward in the movie can be done by simply rotating Shuttle button to the corresponding speed (each point on the margin represents a different speed which will be shown by OSD in the top left hand corner of video window). The Pad docked in the left side of play control panel hides options for quick change of the subtitles, audio track, chapter/title repeating, digital zooming and frame capturing. The numbers in this extended area allow quick jumping to the chapters while playing VCDs. In the case of Audio CD playing these represent the number of tracks detected. Taking a look at the number of media types ShowTime is tailored to play I have to say that it is impressive. The player can deal with any files from the most popular formats like AVI, MPEG, VOB, IFO, MP3, MP4, WAV, WMA and WMV, MOV, FLV, DivX or OGG to less employed ones like MOV, AIFF, AA, OGM, ASF, MMV (MicroMV movie) or BSF (Blu-ray AVC). One piece of advice though: playing DivX files and alike require a powerful CPU otherwise video and audio will not be synchronized. Options menu permits the user to configure the application to suit your video and audio standards. General menu comes with options for positioning OSD (On-Screen Display) in video window, define actions for keyboard and mouse (set time seek duration, define the action for mouse scroll), frame capturing (where to save the capture and aspect ratio), configure toolbar settings and tooltips. Disc playback dialog is where new options have been added and besides Bookmarks editor you also have Parental Control settings which lets an administrator create profiles for users and Interactive Content (provides settings for disc space required by HD DVD and Blu-ray discs equipped with interactive applications). Video settings is unchanged, providing configuration for video mode (deinterlace tuning), video quality (depending on your computer specs you can crank it to maximum), set Nero Digital settings (video padding), film effects (Luma and Chroma), video enhancement (adjust brightness, contrast, saturation, hue, gamma effect and sharpness of the video). The last option (video enhancement) also comes with a list of presets (Brighten, Darken, Saturate, Vivid Color, Cold Color, Black & White, Violet Hue, Greenish Hue, Softer Sharpness, More Sharpness, Gamma Plus $\frac{1}{4}$ and Gamma Plus $\frac{1}{2}$) designed to help you adjust video quicker. The user can also create his/her own presets and store them for later use. However, during our testing toggling between the various presets present resulted in no effect on the video.

There was no change on manually customizing the brightness and other filters of the video. Audio settings let the user set it up to a 7.1 audio system. The output mode can be selected between three different mixing technologies (Nero Surround, Virtual Speaker or Dolby Surround) or can be left to default. If enabled, Dynamic Range Control (DRC) will limit the difference between quiet and louder audio parts of the video. The compression level can be adjusted by simply dragging by a slider to the desired degree. For those not wanting to deal with this feature, you leave the application auto adjust the level. External subtitles can be adjusted in terms of font and text color. So you can make them as large as you see fit and apply whatever color soothes your eyes. To make it look more professional you can enable shadow and define how much of it should be visible. Collateral options include DNC (Dynamic Noise Control) that decrease the noise made by CDs and DVDs during play, enhancing your listening pleasure. The default setting does not enable this feature so you are going to manually check this. All in all the application will do quite fine with playing DVDs, but there are a few things to take care of, like the options for video enhancement or making available more image formats for image capturing. **The Good** Nero ShowTime comes with a complete play control panel offering you quick access to the most important functions. It is easy to manipulate and will not pose any problems, regardless of your skills. It can capture frames and automatically set them as wallpaper or save them to a user defined location in BMP format. Chapter slider is quite an asset when tooltips are enabled. **The Bad** Video enhancement options and presets are not working. DivX rendering is quite disturbing and takes a lot of your CPU. Frame capturing is limited to BMP format. There are little audio settings for those with heavy audio artillery (no effects of any sort in this case). **The Truth** Nero's share of the market with Nero ShowTime is still rather modest but if you decide on buying the entire suite there is no reason not to use it. The latest version (4.0.2.0) comes with a few improvements and additions in terms of options. Though it comes with almost minimum options and some of them do not quite work, it'll do the job it was tailored for, i.e. playing DVD videos and not only. It can also run various video formats like AVI, FLV, ASF, WMV or MOV as well as audio formats (MP3, WMA, OGG and CDA). Proceed to [Nero BackItUp](#), [Nero BurningROM](#), [Nero CoverDesigner](#), [Nero Express](#), [Nero Home](#), [Nero PhotoSnap](#), [Nero PhotoSnap Viewer](#), [Nero Recode](#), [Nero Vision](#), [Nero WaveEditor](#), [Nero StartSmart](#), [Nero Scout](#), [Nero InfoTool](#), [Nero RescueAgent](#), [Nero DiscSpeed](#), [Nero DriveSpeed](#), [Nero BurnRights](#), [Nero ControlCenter](#), [Nero SoundTrax](#) Here are some snapshots of the application in action: