



ROTEL RDV-1080 DVD-A/CD PLAYER

"Contagious, Highly Contagious"



Upon first learning that I would be reviewing a Rotel DVD player for this issue, I had difficulty believing it. Through all my years of writing in the consumer electronics industry, I had yet to experience firsthand what I "knew" of Rotel. All my understanding had come secondhand—from information that I'd heard and read about. This time around, I would be getting the backstage pass. I would experience for myself the essence of their award-winning engineering and excellence in soundstaging. This time around, Rotel's reputation was not going to supersede them. It would be up to my discerning eyes and ears.

What I discovered over the next few days was that my eyes, ears and throat were all going to be affected by this one review—forever. Why my throat, you ask? Simply because I can't seem to shut up about it. Results on the RDV-1080 tests were all coming back, "Contagious, highly contagious." Here's how I came down with it.

Unique Features

Delving right in, the features of the Rotel are many. For starters, the RDV-1080 reads DVD-A, DVD-V, CD, and CD-V discs—the whole deal—via an advanced optical transport system, featuring a high precision "airtight" disc tray to shield the disc from exterior vibration. A segmented power supply feeds totally separated video, servo/DSP, and audio circuit boards (the audio board is further sub-divided so that each channel is isolated from the others). The latest LSIs (large scale integrated circuits) handle digital-to-analog conversions of even 24-bit audio data sampled at 192kHz. Jitter, a time-based inaccuracy that often degrades performance in less sophisticated designs, is virtually eliminated due to the RDV-1080's advanced D/A converters, fully shielded reclocking circuitry, and totally separate digital and analog power supplies. The RDV-1080 easily handles stereo PCM, Dolby Digital, DTS, and MPEG audio.

Playing my overworked Eagles *Hell Freezes Over* DVD, I was extremely pleased with how the RDV-1080 excels at delivering a musical image. The vocals were unbelievably full and harmonious coming through my reference B&K AVR307 receiver and Paradigm Phantom speakers. I continued listening for over two hours, unable to walk away.

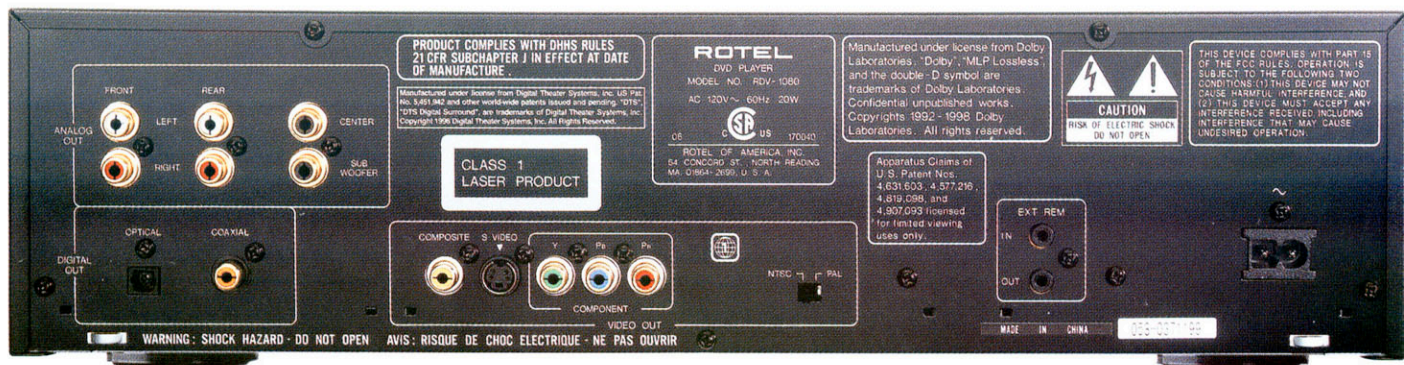
The included remote is simple, and did leave something to be desired. Nevertheless, it is intuitive. ▶

▲ **Though simple in appearance**, the RDV-1080 is fitted with an advanced optical transport system, featuring a high precision "airtight" disc tray.

When I finally opened my eyes, I decided that it was time to start writing. I placed my Dave Matthews *Under the Table and Dreaming* compact disc in just to get me going and then it hit me. "Ants Marching" gave way to my next scrutiny; that of viewing *Flik and Dot* in



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Disney's *A Bug's Life*.

Time to take some notes on the video front. The Rotel RDV-1080's RISC (reduced instruction set computer) IC is capable of 100 million instructions per second (MIPS) and controls a 10-bit video D/A converter operating at 54MHz. When "they" say that this assures the best picture quality, it's true. Broad-bandwidth video processing permits precise control of seven parameters including brightness, contrast, color saturation, and sharpness. I was half tempted to slap Hopper for bullying on all those little ants, when I realized ... it was just a movie (smile).

Complete with composite, S-Video, component, coaxial and Toslink outputs, the RDV-1080 boasts progressive scan capability to deliver the full potential of DVD to the most revealing direct view TV sets and large screen projectors. On my reference Fujitsu PDS-5002 50-inch Plasma HD Display, I couldn't wipe the sleep from my eyes enough times. Had I been dreaming? Brightness? Color? Sharpness? The Pixar animation was remarkably life-like.

In addition, the RDV-1080 features a "display off" mode for lower noise and to reduce distraction in darkened rooms, gold-plated output jacks for optimum signal transfer and resistance to corrosion, and a high-resolution graphical user interface (GUD). My favorite feature of the RDV-1080, however, just might be the 13-step zoom function. Let me tell you, watching ants of all things, this was a carnival especially when it came down to the Flea Circus.

The included remote is simple, and did leave something to be desired. However, I'm being picky here, because for those interested in this unit, a universal learning remote is most likely what is already in hand, if not on the list for next

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purchase. Nevertheless, an intuitive remote.

On a different note, I enjoyed learning that Rotel as accompany are firm believers in there being no substitute for dedicated local sales and service; they are more concerned with their products being sold and demonstrated accurately, rather than being in as many stores as possible. This is why you will not find Rotel sold via mail order, over the Internet, in huge chain stores, or direct to the public. I find this to be a highly admirable trait for a company today.

Installation/Setup

For as simple in appearance as this unit is, the build quality was one of the finest I'd seen. Just taking it out of the box, it felt weighty and solid, a serious 11 pounds. Connecting the RDV-1080 was, odd-as-it-sounds, enjoyable. When you're handling a piece of equipment that was built from the inside out with very apparent premium parts, there's something about the setup that makes the whole experience more pleasant. Connections were visually straightforward. Integration to my reference system took under 10 minutes.

▲ **Complete with** composite, S-Video, component, coaxial and Toslink outputs, the RDV-1080 boasts progressive scan capability.

Final Take

When rumors of DVD were first swirling around, the joke was that DVD stood for "Doubtful, Very Doubtful." For Rotel to introduce this one-unit answer in a whirlwind of products offering less for more, they have successfully combined the best of traditional and cutting-edge technologies with the right price. Rotel does not fashion themselves to be the first on the block to introduce the latest trendy feature. Instead, they prefer to refine existing technology. And they are damn good at it.

So, if you're wondering if Rotel will be the one to engineer the next great advancement in DVD? Perhaps. But, will they be the ones we hear of it from first? Doubtful, very doubtful. We'll all be waiting with anticipation to experience Rotel's improvement on that latest advancement. I know I will be. I've definitely caught it for certain this time around. And the word is spreading. Ⓞ

— By Alisha May Turner

Rating
92

Rotel

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www.rotel.com

Suggested Retail Price

\$1,500.00