

Rotel

RVD-1080 DVD-A PLAYER



sharp, crisp and beautifully saturated pictures in ordinary play mode as well as in all the special play modes (still frame, fast play, slow motion, zoom etc). The player has an unusual 'strobe' mode. If you activate this while a disc is paused, the screen will divide into nine parts and display the next nine images

on the disc. Press 'play' and each of these images will become 'real-time'. It's a gimmick, but a great one!

Progressive scan is fitted, but all our viewing was done with PAL discs on a standard Australian PAL monitor, and prog scan works only with NTSC discs and NTSC TV monitors. The RDV-1080 enables excellent control over picture quality, with adjustments for brightness, contrast, sharpness, gamma, tint, colour and Y-delay (some are only for NTSC). In fact, the Rotel offers all the controls and features you're ever likely to need. It doesn't have an info screen to display technical details about the DVD that's playing (audio and video bit rate, audio/video standard, etc), but this is pretty much a 'frill' that is of interest only to tech-heads in any case.

Conclusion

The beauty of Rotel's RDV-1080 is that it will deliver great sound from your CDs and even better sound from your DVD-As as well as excellent pictures and sound from your DVDs. And if DVD-A fails to become the dominant super-fidelity audio system, of the future, so what? You'll still have yourself a top-notch CD/DVD player.

Bb

We've been waiting so long for DVD-A that when Rotel's RVD-1080 lobbied into the office, it was almost anticlimactic. But the RVD-1080 is more than just a DVD-A player; it's also an exceptionally capable DVD player.

Equipment

For those readers who have missed all the excitement, DVD-A is a new super-audio format that is being touted to replace CD. Its frequency response is far superior to CD, extending to 88kHz (compared to 20kHz with CD) and its signal-to-noise ratio is also far higher. Distortion is far lower with DVD-A, both in-band and out-of-band.

However, DVD-A's main advantage is that it is not restricted to just two channels of audio, like CD. It can contain up to six channels, and not at reduced resolution, like ordinary DVD: DVD-A supports multichannel sample rates of 48, 96 and 196kHz and bit depths of 16, 20 and 24bits, so you can enjoy multichannel audio with resolution far higher than CD.

The Rotel is quite complex to operate because there are so many features and options available, so it was interesting to find that the player's onscreen display (OSD) is for the most part configured to look like a filing-card system, in much the same way options are selected in Microsoft Word under the Tools:Options menu. This makes it very easy and intuitive to navigate around the various options and, once you've selected a virtual 'card' the sub-options are just as obvious. Select 'Preference 2' for example, and you can then adjust Digital Audio Output, Downmix, Compression, DTS Bass Management, Auto-Standby and Screen Saver.

Rotel further simplifies things by locking out some features. You can access these only if you indicate that you wish to use the

'Expert' menu. In this way, someone can preset (for example) speaker size, level, delay and bass management options and be confident that someone else using the system will not be able to alter their settings, so long as they stay out of the 'Expert' area.

We were very impressed by Rotel's menu with the sole exception of the parental lock feature, which we feel is poorly implemented: both the pop-up that displays if a restricted disc is inserted, and the password.

Performance

Best Buys' library of DVD-A discs currently consists of just three, two of which are freebie 'samplers' we picked up at DVD-A launches, so our DVD-A sessions are necessarily short. Nonetheless, they left us with no doubt that DVD-A is an audio *tour de force*.

We had only a brief session with speakers whose response extended to 88kHz (most tweeters start rolling off at around 20kHz), but this was certainly sufficient to whet the appetite. However, even if you don't have speakers with the special super-tweeters that are necessary to support the extended bandwidth DVD-A offers, the reduction in distortion, particularly at low levels and the improved noise floor represent significant improvements in the state of the art.

Delighted as we were with the sonic performance, we were less so with the speed of the machine's response. Discs are very slow to load, and moving from track to track can sometimes be slow when using the track forward and track reverse buttons. (The speed varies with the type of disc loaded.)

As a DVD player, the RVD-1080 turned in just as strong a performance, delivering

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| PRICE: | \$2099 |
| WARRANTY: | 3 years |
|  | DVD-A at last! Great menu system |
|  | No CD-R/CD-RW playback Lacks CD-Text readout |
| CONTACT: | International Dynamics Australasia Pty Ltd 1800 456 393 id@internationaldynamics.com.au www.internationaldynamics.com.au |

For additional information, turn to page 130 and circle 0681 on our Reader Information Service Card.