

Classé Delta CDP-300 ♦ £5,000 (approx) ♦ 01903 221500 ♦ www.classeaudio.com

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GUARANTEE



Top-end player in a Classé of its own

The CDP-300 is probably the most distinctive DVD player in the world. Alvin Gold gets a VIP pass to the high-end of home theatre

Of all the prestige home cinema components, few have the pulling power of Canadian brand Classé's distinctive Delta series. With its massive wrap-around aluminium body and touchscreen LCD front-panel controls, the Delta CDP-300 is, for many reasons, a remarkable DVD player. Aside from its ingenious control panel, slot-loading DVD mechanism and bulletproof build quality, it is also the first player that combines an innovative LCD miniscreen and 1080p video output. Is this enough to lure high-end buyers away from the Denon A1XVA?

At the heart of the CDP-300 is a brand-new piece of high-speed silicon, the AVC2510 Dual Channel Video Format Converter from National Semiconductors. It performs the role of scaler and deinterlacer, converting all video inputs to 1920 x 1080 pixels at 50/60Hz (1080p), and back down to whatever is agreed by

the HDMI handshake protocol between the player and the display screen. A separate lower-definition video stream is available simultaneously, which feeds the LCD panel on the front of the player, though it was designed specifically for picture-in-picture. Analogue video processing is limited to 576i/p through the component output.

The National Semiconductor chip includes extensive contrast, edge enhancement and colour remapping, and powerful MPEG mosquito noise reduction which affects moving images, improving edge definition and chroma noise. With a more pedestrian processor, the CDP-300 would be a lot less impressive than it is. Video D/A conversion is 12 bit, with 54x oversampling, with menu selection of interlaced and deinterlaced output from HDMI. The internal deinterlacing will almost always be superior to the deinterlacing provided by the display screen or projector.

Jitter (time-based processing errors) is a recognised problem in the audio arena but less so with video. DVD players tend to suffer disproportionately due to the proliferation of clocks, with the audio master clock usually derived indirectly from the video master clock. Here, the audio and video master clocks are entirely separate, and the audio content from all

SPECIFICATIONS

ITEM	SUPPORT	DETAILS
Video upscaling	○	720p, 1080i and 1080p
Progressive scan	○	At all resolutions
Multiregion	×	Region 2 from the box
Composite video	○	1 output
Phono stereo audio	○	Plus 5.1 output
S-video	○	1 output
HDMI/DVI	○	One HDMI socket
Scart	×	It's beyond Scart sockets!
Component	○	1 output, progressive
DV (i.Link) input	○	Use 5.1 analogue output instead
Digital Audio	○	Coaxial & optical, balanced AES/EBU

Dimensions: 455(w) x 121(h) x 419(d) mm; **Weight:** 21kg

Also featuring

Proprietary CAN BUS in/out system control for inter-Classé component communication; RS232 control/upgrade; trigger 1x in, 2x out, IR in/out; National Semiconductors AVC2510 scaler & deinterlacer, scales all SDTV and HDTV standards up to 1080p 60Hz via HDMI output and to 576i/p via analogue component output. 3x 24bit 192kHz dual differential D/A converter chains; touchscreen interface, will also show DVD material on internal screen; slot-loading Tech mechanism - only contacts edge of disc

RATINGS

Highs: High-end DVD and audio performance;

Lows: Designed to partner only other Classé kit; no DivX

Picture	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★½
Features	★★★★½
OVERALL	★★★★½

Tried & Tested... DVD Player



COMPATIBILITY

DVD-V	<input type="checkbox"/>	SVCD	<input type="checkbox"/>
DVD-A	<input type="checkbox"/>	DualDisc (CD)	<input type="checkbox"/>
SACD	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	DualDisc (DVD)	<input type="checkbox"/>
CD	<input type="checkbox"/>	DivX	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
MP3	<input type="checkbox"/>	DVD+R	<input type="checkbox"/>
WMA	<input type="checkbox"/>	DVD-R	<input type="checkbox"/>
JPEG	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	DVD+RW	<input type="checkbox"/>
MPEG4	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	DVD-RW (Video)	<input type="checkbox"/>
CD-R	<input type="checkbox"/>	DVD-RW (VR)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
CD-RW	<input type="checkbox"/>	DVD-RAM	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Video CD	<input type="checkbox"/>		

LAB REPORT

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
PLAYBACK				
Video jitter (2ns)	✓			
Signal-to-noise ratio:				
Composite (74.2dB)		✓		
S-video (79.2dB)	✓			
Component (79.1dB)	✓			
Chroma AM/PM				
AM (-76.0dB)	✓			
PM (-67.4dB)	✓			
Chroma crosstalk (-65.9dB)	✓			
Freq response @5.8 MHz				
Composite (-2.1dB)			✓	
S-video (-2.1dB)			✓	
Component Y (+2.1dB)	✓			
Audio jitter (209.5ps)	✓			

sources is upscaled to 24 bit 192kHz via a CPLD (Complex Programmable Logic Device) and sample rate converter, and re-clocked before being processed by the D/A converter. In every respect it is an unusually sophisticated and well-executed design which, in the case of the front main stereo output pair, is internally balanced, and equipped with an XLR based balanced output, though standard phonos are also available. The benefit of balanced operation is superior signal/noise, with reduced hum and noise pickup between the player and amplifier which makes long leads viable. Classé's matching processor and power amplifiers are also fully balanced, so this feature can be used throughout the complete system.

Another feature used consistently in the Delta range is the touchscreen LCD panel. This can be upgraded as required, either to accommodate particular requirements, or as the internal firmware is developed. It already includes features aimed at custom installers. For the very highest performance, the display can be switched off, or shown temporarily when making selections.

Performance

Performance is exceptional for a DVD player, and when used as a stereo CD player, the CDP-300 is up in the audiophile stratosphere, which is one reason why the player costs what it does. It is also an exceptional DVD-Audio player in fully-fledged multichannel trim. It breathes openly, sounds spatially expensive and musically dynamic, and offers a wealth of detail off disc.

Most readers, however, will be more interested in its video performance, and the good news is the CDP-300 excels. Handling of motion artefacts is particularly impressive. Rapid motion of agitated water (the bow wave from power boats at the start of my newly acquired Dolby Experience demo disc) provides a remarkably good if brief example, in which every water drip is rendered with clinical, almost holographic precision, with none of the usual smudging (mosquito noise). But it is every bit as effective in scrolling end credits, where the same artefact normally introduces random flashes of colour and loss of sharpness.

The Classé is equally effective elsewhere, such as in the battle scenes

from *Gladiator*, and the amazing action scenes from *Spider Man 2*.

In common with a select group of players, for example those using the Silicon Optix HQV scaler/deinterlacer (notably the A1XVA from Denon), the CDP-300 has the ability to render more detail than normal DVD decks, for example of scenes including large areas of grass, which otherwise appear homogenised, or other highly detailed scenes, and it can cope remarkably well with processing of motion. It is a revelation after watching other DVD players. Where the Classé departs from others is in its superb handling of audio, especially legacy two channel CD, which is where is where so many players trip themselves up. Black levels are deep and pure, and scaling up to 720p (the best available using a resident Sharp XV-Z3000 DLP projector) is clean and transparent, with remarkably few artefacts.

Conclusion

This is what DVD is all about when executed properly. Gorgeous, beautifully built and impressively specified, the Classé is a fine wine amongst plonk ■



An advanced slot-loading mechanism only contacts the edge of the disc



The colour LCD panel can actually display DVD content



The chunky remote control doesn't quite match the deck's stylings



Naturally, all the output terminals are gold-plated