

PRODUCT

Denon DVD-A11 DVD PLAYER

Yamaha DSP-AZ9 SURROUND AMPLIFIER

ATC Concept 3 SPEAKER SYSTEM

PRICE

£1600

£3300

£4877

£9777

FOR

Extraordinary levels of build quality and specification; stunning vision and sound performance

AGAINST

Nothing, apart from the price. Well, some might say that the speakers could be a little better-looking

VERDICT

★★★★★

Remarkable kit, able to take on any video or audio task you ask of it and carry it out superbly. It's amazingly simple to set up and use, as well

WHY WOULD YOU want to spend nearly £10,000 on home cinema kit? You get digital video and audio transfer systems, comprehensive processing and decoding options, and universal disc replay, true – but you can specify all those things within a £6000 budget. So why does this system cost so much?

Firstly and most obviously, because it's built to a very high standard. Heaving each of the components from its box is an exercise in itself, and one not best attempted single-handedly: Yamaha's giant DSP-AZ9 amplifier weighs over 30kg, while ATC's huge C4 active subwoofer tips the scales at a back-wrenching 52kg. Even the Denon DVD-A11 DVD player is a veritable leviathan, sumptuously constructed from thick slabs of solid metal. Subjectively, you feel that you're getting your money's worth. And the structural solidity of the products is purposeful: this is top-end kit built to perform to very high standards with both movies and music, and every element is massively over-engineered.

The ATC speaker system is so obviously designed for maximised performance – and to the devil with fripperies such as 'style' – that it positively shrieks sonic intent. The magnets in each SCM12 are vast, bigger (by 2.7cm) than the 15cm drive units they control, while each of the sealed-box enclosures is braced and strengthened

“Even the DVD player is a veritable leviathan, sumptuously constructed from thick slabs of solid metal”

in every imaginable way to minimise cabinet resonance. Then there's the 650W amplifier driving the 30cm driver in the C4 subwoofer, giving it the potential to deliver 112dB of continuous output without distortion down to an extraordinary 19Hz.

Link this lot with some more affordable amplifiers and you might find yourself in difficulty – ATC's package is both an awkward impedance and less than sensitive. But the

Yamaha DSP-AZ9 simply laughs in the face of awkward loads, as any product with quite so much power and current supply should. This massively sophisticated multichannel design can automatically configure itself to create an optimised sonic result, adjusting parameters such as speaker crossover, relative positioning and output levels with the help of a small set-up microphone. It's a fine foil for the dynamic, accurate-sounding ATCs, adding a degree of warmth to the mix without sapping drive or focus in any way. Quite the reverse is true, in fact: even in standard 5.1-speaker form, the DSP-AZ9 and ATC combination provides a surround rendering that can only be described as a semi-religious experience. Bass is huge, front-speaker clout remarkable, and the sense of sonic cohesion from speaker to speaker truly amaz.

It can get even better, if you want – and have the money – because the Yamaha can support no fewer than nine speakers. Two can be added for centre-rear-channel use, and yet another two (smaller ones) for 'presence' effects on the front channels. Especially if music is a priority, that's not strictly necessary; the combination provides a fine multichannel audio sound as things stand, and even delivers a good result in stereo, especially if you opt to send audio via the FireWire digital cable. This single-wire link between DVD player and amplifier can be used to send all forms of sound, configuring the amp automatically to use a movie or a music sound mode as is appropriate. It works superbly.

Last thing: the DVD-A11 provides superb pictures, especially with a display able to make use of its DVI-D digital video output. This can provide selectable 'scaled' video, with up to 1080i (one thousand and eighty interlaced lines of image information) possible. The DSP-AZ9 contributes to the picture element of things, as well, offering its own internal Faroudja progressive-scan processor

and scaler. That means you can not only watch DVDs in higher resolution, but also enjoy TV, games and other video signals at similar quality.

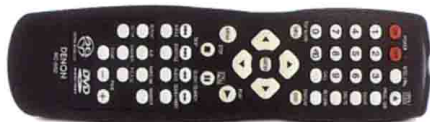
Innovative performance-orientated features and original thinking ensure this system's appeal. It combines 'old-school' engineering virtues with the cutting-edge appeal of the latest in surround sound and video processing technology, with superb results. If you can manage the money, it's a must-audition.

ATC's Concept 3 speaker system is massive in every sense. The 650W active sub weighs no less than 52kg



There's no denying this system is expensive, but the combination of high-quality components gives really exceptional images and sounds.

This is not a set-up to attempt to install on your own: some of the equipment is heavy enough to do you a serious mischief just unpacking it.



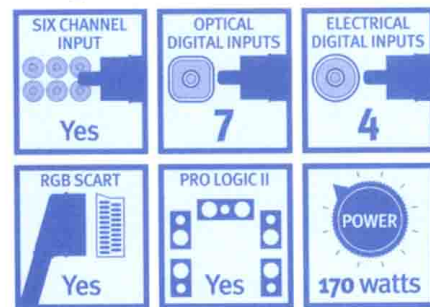


The DVD-A11 has DVI-D digital output capable of providing scaled video at up to 1080 lines of resolution

Specifications

DVD player: Denon DVD-A11 Discs played Digital outputs Video connections	DVD-Video, DVD-Audio, SACD, CD Coaxial, optical, FireWire RGB Scart, S-Video, composite video, component (PAL/NTSC progressive), DVI-D (HDCP-compliant)	Decoding modes Digital connections Analogue connections Tuner	Dolby Digital 5.1, Dolby Digital EX, DTS-ES Matrix 6.1, DTS-ES Discrete 6.1, DTS 96/24 7 optical, 4 coaxial, 2 FireWire 14 (including phono) None
Amplifier: Yamaha DSP-AZ9 Power output Processing modes	170W x 7, 50W x 2 THX Ultra2, THX Surround EX, Dolby Pro-Logic, Dolby Pro-Logic II, Dolby Pro-Logic IIx, DTS Neo:6	Speaker system: ATC Concept 3 Size (largest h x w x d) Power handling (lowest) Impedance (lowest) Sensitivity (lowest)	33 x 20 x 26cm 300W 4 ohms 86dB/W/m

At a glance....



Seven's heaven but nine's divine...

You get sensational sounds using ATC's excellent Concept 3 set-up in normal 5.1 home cinema format, but the Yamaha DSP-AZ9 can support up to nine speakers if you have the money and space.