

Blu-ray for big boys

Richard Stevenson loves this BD transport deck so much, he bought one



When is a Blu-ray player not a Blu-ray player? When it's a Blu-ray transport – like Denon's imposing-looking DVD-2500BT. The nomenclature gives it away: this is a multi-purpose video disc-spinner, primarily Blu-ray and DVD, but its real strength lies in what it hasn't got. Namely onboard audio-processing, multiple AV outputs or high-end video tweakery. In fact, spin this beast around and all you will find on the back panel is a solitary HDMI output, an RS232 port and a couple of multiroom jacks.

I have never been one for minimalism, but Denon just might have an idea here. If you have an all-singing, all-dancing AV amp, receiver or processor with cutting-edge audio-decoding and fancy video scaling built-in, why pay to duplicate these features? So **Denon has taken its purist BD player, the £1,700 DVD-3800BD, and thrown out all the nonessential features** to offer the same core performance at a much lower price. As you still get the Denon Precision Drive Mechanism, separate block construction, multi-layer chassis and all of the core high-end hardware components, one can only view the DVD-2500BT's £900 price tag as a cinephile bargain.

It's not as stripped down and basic as one might think either. Even if you don't have a high-end amp, the DVD-2500BT has a basic 1080p up-scaler built-in for prime connection straight to an HDTV. That

HDMI output is fully v1.3a compliant and you get 24Hz support as well. The menus use none-too-shoddy graphics, it handles DivX discs with ease and it has an SD-card slot on the front for JPEGs, MP3 or WMA files.

On the downside there's no SACD or DVD-A playback or Denon-Link connection to reduce jitter in the audio data stream (and the HDMI format can have more jitters than a wino on a Sunday morning). It's Profile 1.1, too, (Bonus View) and disc-loading and unloading is painfully slow compared to DVD.

Just as well then that it produces simply breathtaking Blu-ray pictures. We are talking a jaw-dropping upgrade over basic players such as the PS3, with silky smooth scrolling, black levels from the depths of Hades and a range of colour tones that will stretch all but the very best high-end display devices. I was lucky enough to audition the very first DVD-2500BT that arrived in the UK and within minutes of spinning the first disc I knew I needed a major projector upgrade.

For a sub £1,000 price tag the DVD-2500BT eclipses the video performance of any Denon source that has preceded it. Hook it up to decent 1080p plasma and the image is all but three-dimensional. With a good 1080p projector you can create a 100in image with a contrast ratio and colour rendition that will embarrass most 42in LCD TVs – just check out *Ratatouille* on Blu-ray for an absolute feast for the eyes! ●

AV/CV

Product: Stripped down, performance-driven BD disc transport aimed at enthusiasts

Positioning: Denon's most affordable BD option, below the £1,700 DVD-3800BD.

Peers: Yamaha BD-S2900; Panasonic DMP-BD55

→ Specifications

Video upscaling: yes DVD to 1080p

Progressive scan: yes

Multiregion: no Region B (BD); R2 (DVD)

HDMI: yes v1.3

Component: no

Multichannel phono audio: no

Digital audio: yes but only HDMI

SACD/DVD-A playback: no not offered

Dolby True HD/DTS-HD decoding: no/no

Dolby True HD/DTS-HD bitstream out: yes/yes

Blu-ray profile: 1.1

Dimensions: 434(w) x 139(h) x 391(d)mm

Weight: 9.2kg

Also featuring: SD card slot, 24Hz playback, DivX playback, multi-layer chassis



HCC VERDICT

Denon DVD-2500BT
£900 Approx

Price check: www.techradar.com/476937

Highs: Stunning Blu-ray picture; very good with DVDs; faultless build; a joy to use

Lows: Needs high-end AV amp and top-end display device; no SACD/DVD-A; no Denon-Link; not Profile 2.0

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5