

HOME CINEMA

HIGH-PERFORMANCE SOUND & VISION

TOP DISCS!
2012 MOVIE
AWARDS
ISSUE

Choice

Gallic char
Cabasse M
system rated, p

Exclusive!

Sonic warriors

Denon's Blu-ray/AVR duo delivers surround sound thrills

UltraViolet
Should you swap discs for digital?

MOVIE AWARDS SPECIAL

The year's best Blu-rays and DVDs revealed ■ Prometheus, Jaws, The Raid & more.

- TOTAL RECALL
- THE EXPENDABLES
- THE DARK KNIGHT RISES
- THE RED DWARF

INTEGRATED NETWORK AV RECEIVER AVR-3313

Sony goes large

New 3D projector targets bigscreen crown

Cinema starts here!

46in-47in flatscreen TV group test

ON TEST

Philips 46PFL970

Pioneer SC-202

Toshiba BDX530

INSIDE IPAD-CONTROLLED MOVIE DEN → UNIVERSAL 3D GLASSES → REL T9 SUBWOOFER → TOP 10 GEAR GUIDE

www.homecinemachoice

ISSUE 216 JANUARY 2013 £4.30
AUS - \$9.99 NZ - \$12.99 CAN - \$12.50



Denon's deadly duo

Denon's DBT-3313UD transport is designed to partner the brand's AVR-3313. Never one to argue with nature, **Richard Stevenson** lets this new pairing loose together

THERE IS SOMETHING right about using a BD player and AVR that have been designed together as an holistic partnership. One can expect not only matching cosmetics but a synergistic duo, like Bonnie and Clyde or Sooty and Sweep. And not only should their performance exceed the sum of the parts, they won't look like a car-crash into a Richer Sounds shop-front on your kit rack, either.

Enter Denon's AVR-3313 and DBT-3313UD, sporting a fetching line in premium silver – a more sedate black finish is also available. And this is no regular AVR and Blu-ray player combi. Not only are both festooned with Denon's bespoke technologies and high-performance components, the DBT-3313UD is actually a dedicated universal disc transport rather than a standard BD deck. It has no analogue or

digital audio outputs – just HDMI, Denon Link HD and stereo audio for multizone. In fact, Denon now eschews fully-equipped decoding players and only offers transports. This makes a lot of sense as anyone buying a £900 Blu-ray player is likely to have the decoding hardware in their AVR or processor anyway.

While the AVR and transport talk video over a traditional HDMI connection, the audio can



be routed via the latest incarnation of Denon Link HD. Using the supplied phono-to-phono cable, digital audio is sent from disc to the decoding processors in the AVR near jitter-free, promising even better sound than that achievable over HDMI. Surprisingly, Denon Link HD is not backwards-compatible with any of the previous generations of Denon Link which used CAT5 cable. Although the new version promised to engage automatically when the cable is connected, thus negating the deep-menu shenanigans of previous links, that just didn't happen – as you will read later.

Supporting 3D Blu-ray, DVD, CD, SACD and DVD-A discs, the DBT-3313UD oozes style and a no-compromise build. From the solid fascia and ultra-sleek SVH loading mechanism to the chunky gold-plated connectors on the rear, it is a class act. There are two HDMI outputs; one labelled 'audio', the other as 'video'. Both terminals output simultaneously, but Pure Direct mode splits the sound and vision over the two.

Connected to your network, the DBT-3313UD offers direct access to Netflix and YouTube, and its DLNA function can stream music files up to FLAC at 192kHz/24-bit.

Connections

The AVR-3313 has a more traditional array of connections, albeit not the terminal excess of some of Denon's previous £1,000 AVRs. Most interesting are the three HDMI outputs, including one for Zone 2, although only two of these can be driven simultaneously. The new Denon Link HD socket takes top-line billing along with four optical inputs. On the obviously missing list are any digital optical outputs or multichannel analogue inputs. Given the matching BD transport's eschewing of analogue outputs that would seem okay, but could be limiting in the future if some other multichannel format emerges that the AVR can't handle. Still, the architecture is fully firmware upgradeable over its Ethernet connection and there are plenty of toys to be

AV INFO

PRODUCT: Seven-channel AV receiver and universal disc transport

POSITION: The DBT-3313UD is Denon's current flagship deck; the AVR-3313 is only out-muscled by the AVR-4520

PEERS: Marantz UD7007/SR7007; Oppo BDP-105EU; Onkyo TX-NR818; Pioneer SC-LX56

going along with. These include 4K scaling, should you be wealthy enough to own a 4K display of some sort (and don't trust its own 4K chipper...) three-zone output, a whopping claimed 165W-per-channel output (to seven channels) and a new GUI with wizard-style setup assistant. It's fully networked, of course, DLNA-certified and continues to offer AirPlay audio streaming for Apple fans. And it now has Spotify, too, just to annoy Onkyo.

Both units come with Denon's latest remote control, which has gone a little retro and



The new AVR-3313 hides additional USB and HDMI inputs behind a pull-down flap

old-school; 'black with buttons' and no backlight. This, we assume, is because Denon expects users to leverage the funky Denon Remote App on their iOS or Android device.

Power up the receiver and you're guided through basic connections and setup with an assumed AV knowledge-level that your mum couldn't get confused by. Thankfully these can be skipped through very quickly until you get to the Audyssey MultEQ XT setup. This incarnation now forces you to measure at least three seating positions in the room, extending the setup time to about 10 minutes.

Denon's new GUIs are quite different from each other. The AVR is more traditional, with each menu layer displayed on the whole

'I was quickly revelling in the Denon duo's pace and sheer passion for delivering high-octane thrills'

screen. Click a function in this menu and the screen changes completely to the options of that function. It is clear, but easy to get lost. Conversely, the DBT uses a three-column grid so you can see three layers of the menu at once. Less confusing, but it leaves little room for function descriptions. You get a number of truncated feature names such 'Dynamic Range C...' and, my favourite, 'Parental Con...'

My usual setup routine involves waiting for the Audyssey EQ to finish, before going into the menus and switching off all the extraneous features that may affect performance, including disabling all HDMI CEC controls. This, it transpired, stops Denon Link HD from functioning. You must have HDMI control switched on, in both machines, to enable the completely separate Denon Link HD cable to work. Go figure. While I am filing stuff in the niggly drawer, I could not get the AVR remote control to operate the BD player. This may be rectified in firmware before you read this, but worth checking.

Pace and passion

With setup done I was quickly revelling in the Denon duo's pace and sheer passion for delivering high-octane thrills. The performance of this £2,000 ensemble is inspired.

Audio over Denon Link HD is absolutely superb, dropping the noise floor well into the basement and giving the sound spectacular dynamic range. The Audyssey EQ system does its job well (although there is no facility to switch it on or off from the remote without diving into the menus), but even without the EQ the sound is fast and frisky with exceptional top-end detailing and tightly controlled bass. The AVR-33xx models were



always some of Denon's more refined and poised-sounding receivers and this pairing takes that refinement to the next level.

A wet Sunday afternoon demanded something belly-achingly funny and *Hot Fuzz* on DVD came quickly to hand. The receiver's upscaling proved top-drawer stuff, making the SD resolution look pleasingly close to a fully-fledged BD 1080p release; sharp, detailed and with smooth motion processing.

As Simon Pegg rides into town on the horse, the Denon duo builds the scene with admirable atmosphere and great attention to little sonic details. Then, as the bullets start to fly, the AVR goes up a gear in pace yet continues to extract every bit of sonic information from the disc. The bullets hitting plant pots are portrayed as discrete events; the shot, the impact, the exploding pot and all the bits of earthenware hitting the cobbled streets.

Back in 2000 I reviewed the AVR-3300 with the hot film of the day, *Gladiator*, describing the sound as a revelation in natural dialogue

CONNECTIONS

A GET CONNECTED

With no built-in Wi-Fi onboard, use the DBT-3313UD's Ethernet jack to get online. Direct access to Netflix and YouTube is offered, as well as DLNA file streaming

B LOVE THE LINK

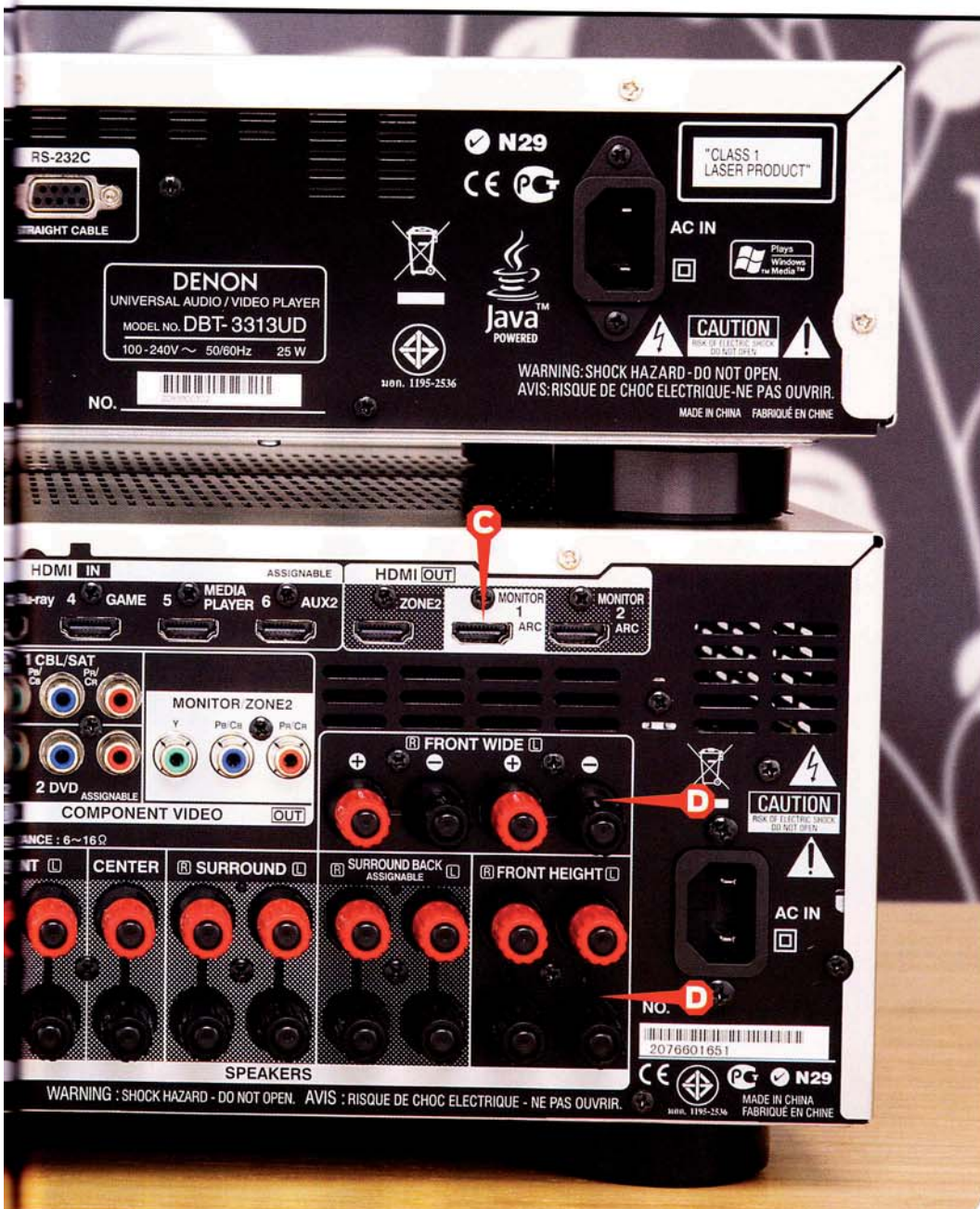
Buyers of both this player and the AVR are advised to connect via Denon Link HD, which offers an improved sound performance than over HDMI

C THREE'S COMPANY

The AVR-3313 provides a trio of HDMI outputs alongside its seven HDMI inputs (one front-mounted), although only two can be used simultaneously

D CHOOSE YOUR FLAVOUR

Although only a seven-channel AVR, the Denon offers speaker outputs for both Front Height and Front Wide, so you can experiment with different arrangements if you're getting bored of traditional 7.1



SPECIFICATIONS

AVR-3313
DOLBY TRUEHD: Yes
DTS-HD MASTER AUDIO: Yes
THX: No
MULTICHANNEL INPUT: No – strangely
MULTICHANNEL OUTPUT (CLAIMED): 7 x 165W
MULTIROOM: Yes. Three-zone including HDMI
AV INPUTS: 3 x composite; 4 x digital audio (2 x optical and 2 x coaxial)
HDMI: 7-in, 2-out (of 3 output sockets), v1.4
VIDEO UPSCALING: Yes – 4K
COMPONENT VIDEO: 2-in, 1-out
DIMENSIONS: 435(w) x 382(d) 168(h)mm
WEIGHT: 12kg
ALSO FEATURING: Spotify integration; ARC on HDMI outputs; Denon Link HD; standby HDMI passthrough; Apple OS and Android control apps; Audyssey MultEQ XT RoomEQ; DLNA media playback; Ethernet; USB; AirPlay

DBT-3313UD
3D: Yes
UPSCALING: Yes
MULTIREGION: No. Region B Blu-ray/R2 DVD
HDMI: 2 x v1.4 outputs
COMPONENT: No
MULTICHANNEL ANALOGUE: No
DIGITAL AUDIO: No – apart from Denon Link HD
ETHERNET: Yes
BUILT IN WI-FI: No
SACD/DVD-A: Yes – both
DOLBY TRUEHD/DTS-HD DECODING: No – transport only
DOLBY TRUEHD/DTS-HD BITSTREAM: Yes
DIMENSIONS: 434(w) x 108(h) x 295(d)mm
WEIGHT: 6.9kg
FEATURES: Netflix and YouTube integration; DLNA streaming; USB file playback; MP3, WMA, AAC, WAV, FLAC, JPEG, MPEG-1, -2, -4, WMV and DivX support; fanless construction; fast-loading SVH mechanism; Pure Direct mode; 0.3W standby power consumption

and movie dynamics. I could use exactly the same sentence here, albeit stepped up several notches into today's HD and high-resolution world. This new pairing makes *Gladiator* on Blu-ray sound fresh and alive, with sparkling special effects and realistically metallic-sounding sword clashes. The grunts, groans and blood are more vivid and defined than ever and the way these machines eke out microscopic sonic details is second to none. If anything I found myself wanting just a little more guts and gusto, a smidgeon more bass excess and maybe the occasional outrageous LFE to throw me off the sofa. The sonic presentation is polished to a royal standard and rich with detail but, some nights, I just want a bit of rough.

This detailed and articulate presentation is absolutely perfect for SACD playback, doubly-so given the typical SACD fare of classical and diddy-diddy music. Yet the Denon excels with remastered rock classics, too. Pink Floyd's *Wish You Were Here* shines

like, well, a crazy diamond, coming across with tangible high-fidelity pedigree. As they might say over on one of our sister hi-fi magazines, the top-end has admirable extension and articulation without succumbing to fatiguing sibilance of brightness. The balance is a bit on the cool side of neutral at the bottom-end but, in a completely non-hi-fi way, I found giving the subwoofer a couple of extra dB on the level setting made the system rock.

I would suggest this is Denon's most refined AVR/player duo to date and that certainly shows through in the HD picture performance, too. The smooth yet fairly slow disc-loading mechanism closes to reveal a picture of outstanding clarity, sharpness and detail. Difficult full-picture diagonal pans are handled easily, equal in performance to any player sporting the current crop of Qdeo processors. The DBT-3313UD may lack a few features compared to the competition, but it's a high-end performer – and don't forget about Denon Link HD... ■

HCC VERDICT



Denon AVR-3313/DBT-3313UD

→ £1,100/£900 Approx → www.denon.co.uk
 → Tel: 02890 279830

HIGHS: Lush build quality; crisp and refined multichannel performance; superb Denon Link HD sound; great Blu-ray performance
LOWS: No analogue inputs on AVR; BD player lacks some of the features of similarly-priced rivals; GUIs not best-of-breed

Performance ★★★★★
 Design ★★★★★
 Features ★★★★★
Overall ★★★★★