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YOU'RE THE TOPS

Could the Marantz VP-11S1 be the best 1080p projector ever?

This year's buzzword in video is actually a number followed by a letter: 1080p. It refers to displays that can display 1,080 horizontal lines progressively, one right after the other—a feat necessary for depicting today's highest-resolution video images in full fidelity. The Marantz VP-11S1 is not the first 1080p front projector *Home Entertainment* has tested; we've already reviewed 1080p LCoS models. But the Marantz is the first out of the gate to employ Texas Instruments' new 1080p DLP chip, which packs over 2 million tiny tiltable mirrors onto a sliver of silicon.

The VP-11S1 presents a mostly square but gently curvaceous chassis that combines gray styling accents that call attention to the Konica Minolta optics up front. The input panel is generously equipped with a pair of component video inputs and another pair of HDMI digital video inputs, in addition to various other ports. Your installer will appreciate the input panel's gentle backlighting, which can be turned off. Marantz also offers a version with upgraded optics that allows the projector to be positioned farther back in the room.

The VP-11S1 uses Texas Instruments' new Dark-Chip3 1080p DLP chip, a new 200-watt bulb assembly, and a super-high-speed color wheel.

The setup menu presents myriad picture adjustments and memory options. Your installer can even assign any of several gamma curve choices and color temperatures to each input—a rare feature indeed. In addition, the setup procedure includes a built-in crosshatch test pattern generator that allows fine-tuning of the vertical lens shift, or offset, with the pattern changing color from white to green to tell your installer when the recommended maximum offset has been exceeded. Excessive offset can result in blurring of fine detail, but even with the offset at its limit, the test pattern was still quite sharp at the picture extremities, a testament to the quality of the optical path. The wide offset range allows your installer to mount the projector closer to the ceiling, roughly in line with the top of the screen.

My color analyzer mostly verified Marantz's color-temperature specifications. Even the highest temperature choice the projector provides was far below the exaggerated bluish that seems to be the norm. We made our measurements with one of the middle settings, which came within a whisker of the 6,500-degree Kelvin ideal color-temperature choice. More importantly, the color varied hardly at all from the brightest white all the way down to the darkest grays, a superlative result. This ensures that

BY DAVID BIRCH-JONES • PHOTOGRAPHY BY CORDERO STUDIOS

the white balance remains stable regardless of variations in scene brightness.

Another important measurement evaluates the accuracy of the primary (red, green, and blue) and secondary (cyan, yellow, and magenta) colors. Here I found virtual perfection, with both the primaries as well as the secondaries matching the DTV specification—the best performance we've seen on this test. Even most displays that get the primary colors right flub the secondaries, polluting cyan with blue, tinging yellow with green, and pushing magenta toward violet.

With actual program material, the projector presents a lush, true-to-life color palette. Skin tones are realistic,

Thanks to its maximum vertical lens shift of +165/-85 percent, the VP-11S1 can be tucked in tight against a ceiling for a cleaner, more discreet installation. A diecast aluminum (not plastic) chassis helps keep the projector running cool.

brightly lit outdoor scenes are vivid but not overly so, and dark details are superbly rendered, all the way down to the blackest blacks. The Marantz provides sufficient output to fill larger screens, but not at the expense of washed-out dark grays and blacks. An adjustable iris and a lower-output lamp setting allow your installer to match the projector's output to suit your screen's size and gain characteristics.

Marantz has chosen the Genuum VXP chip to handle the deinterlacing and scaling functions; it is one of the few chips that provides first-class results with standard-definition sources such as DVD and broadcast TV as well as properly deinterlaces 1080-line interlaced (1080i) high-definition TV. Feeding a single-pixel 1080i test pattern into the VP-11S1 yielded a well-delineated line with no loss of detail. The Genuum easily handled a slew of standard-def deinterlacing tests, and

Marantz anointed the VP-11S1 with all the connections any home theater might need, including two HDMI digital video inputs and a DB-9 jack for RS-232-based touchscreen control systems.

passed a tough horizontal and vertical screen text crawl test that an earlier Genuum-equipped Marantz projector had difficulty with.

High-definition movies looked uniformly excellent, and the Marantz exhibited no contouring or gradation artifacts with darkly lit scenes, such as underwater diving scenes I watched on Discovery HD. With high-definition sports broadcasts, the result was even better. When I tuned into a soccer game on ESPN HD, the super-sharp picture allowed me to see the spin of the pattern on the ball after every kick. The U.S. Open tennis tournament on CBS HD looked very good, with



the Marantz easily defining the court lines and even the webbing of the net.

After dozens of hours of TV and movie viewing over the course of a few weeks, I realized that, except for powering the set on and off and changing inputs, never did I feel the need to tweak or fiddle with any of the picture settings I made during the initial setup procedure. Marantz's VP-11S1 is a superb projector, and we find it difficult to imagine how it could be improved. **[RE]**

■ DESCRIPTION

Single-chip 1080p DLP HDTV front projector. Requires separate projection screen

■ DISPLAY CAPABILITIES

Native 16:9 DLP panel operates in 4:3 and 16:9 modes. Accepts 720-line progressive HDTV, 1080-line progressive and interlaced HDTV signals, 480-line standard-definition progressive and interlaced signals, plus RGB/WXGA computer video

■ RESOLUTION

1920 x 1080 pixels

■ CONNECTIONS

Two analog component video inputs, S-video input, composite video input, two HDMI digital video inputs, RGB computer video input, RS-232 serial port for external control, 3.5mm jacks for IR remote control input and output, and two 3.5mm jacks for 12-volt screen trigger output

■ DIMENSIONS

6.3 x 15.9 x 18.9 inches (hwd)

■ PRICE/CONTACT

PRICE: \$19,999

CONTACT: 201.762.6500, us.marantz.com

