

MITSUBISHI HC3000U HOME THEATER PROJECTOR

Will Have You Rethinking



Big isn't always better, but when it comes to a front projector, does being smaller translate into less powerful features? In the case of the Mitsubishi HC3000U, the answer is a definite no.

What Is/What Isn't

Let's get the obvious negatives out of the way first: at under six-and-a-half pounds and about the size of a fair-sized box of Valentine's chocolate, the design is a bit reminiscent of a multimedia business projector. At least, there's a curved "euro" look to the top. The fan is a bit noisy, but it vents out the front and is noticeable only if you're directly behind it. But once some sound is added, the noise

ceases to be an issue.

Let's move on to what the HC3000U does have: an HDMI input among the expected component, S-video, VGA, and composite, plus a trigger to control motorized screen window blinds, etc., along with a serial port for computer control (additionally, a USB port for service adjustment). The DLP is the DarkChip2 for a high definition 720p image, but with built-in additions that act in concert to expand upon the quality: Brilliant Color, Dynamic Black and TrueVision video processing. The point is that the DDP3020 chip offers a better value without any sacrifice on performance, getting high quality, high definition images with strong colors and a brightness that can fool many eyes into thinking they're looking at a brighter projector with richer contrast ratio. We'll see whether that passes muster in a moment.

▲ The Mitsubishi HC3000U has a business-like, euro look.

Add a selection of aspect ratios, including CinemaScope, and a \$3,000 price point, and this could sit very well with those looking to get into front projection without paying a lot and without giving up on that most important issue: a true HD image.

Put 'Er Right Here

Due to its small size, the projector can be set onto a small table facing the wall-mounted screen, which is how our home theater is arranged (wall or ceiling mounting requires the usual installation and safety procedures, and the image can be flipped when used overhead or reversed for rear projection). This also means a portability for use elsewhere, like being taken



to your friend's house and projected on a wall because he's promising to supply all the munchies. Besides both front and back sensors for the small, but usable, remote, there's even a security lock for the paranoid in all of us. Another nice touch is a filter cover that can be user-installed to better keep dust out. It will also aid in blocking the exit of extraneous light (a small cap is supplied to do the same for the security lock).

The initial mechanics for setup take less than 10 minutes. Attach a video input at the back as well as the power plug. Controls on the top turn it on, select the inputs, and activate the menu, where you can fine-tune and customize settings to your liking. The backlit remote apes all this. Three adjustable feet make it easy to aim the lens at the screen (keystoning mode is also available for use here as well as a digital vertical shift). Both zoom and focus rings are near the front, above the lens, and have small nubs to use and are grooved for finding in the dark (a cross-hatch test pattern in the menu is useful here). The mild amount of zoom easily scaled the image to the screen (about 12 feet away), and we're ready to go. Also, as regards the life of the bulb, its 200-watt output is rated at about 2,000 hours, but can be upped to 3,000 by being set to Low. We always advise against this as it negatively affects illumination, although it is understandable considering what a new bulb costs. Also, when used in Low, the fan becomes quieter.

What You See Is Worth Watching

The projector is turned on, and it's a bright image, that's for sure. Just letting the light bathe the screen, we can see it's uniform and even edge to edge. Of the two tests that it needs to

pass, the first is playing a standard definition TV show off of a digital recorder. We're expecting reasonable contrast and a fair amount of detail without a mushiness between bright and dark areas. What we're seeing is quite good, certainly pleasing, and above quite acceptable in the color range and skin tones. In this respect, it fares well in comparison to more costly projectors. The image also seems a bit brighter than what we're used to. The second test is divided into two parts: the first is a straight feed of HD video from a DishNetwork HD satellite receiver. There's a lot more detail now (as expected from HD), and the colors are more vibrant, which is to say that there's a wider color palette discernible with more depth to them. No artifacting, no problems.

The Oppo Digital DVD player's DVI output is connected through an adaptor to the HDMI in. Choosing it, we watch the tornado scene from *The Wizard of Oz/Two-Disc Special Edition*. This is chosen to see how well the black and whites scenes come through. The shades of grey look realistic, and the contrast and detail are where they should be to our eyes (we kept the motorized iris closed here, rather than opening it to brighten the image). As for Dorothy's color appearance in Oz, she looks stunning, and the colors now presented are not overpowering but enveloping. Switching to the maddening cab chase scene in *The Fifth Element/Superbits Edition*, the riotous play of colors zoom by without any smearing. The level of brightness really adds a "pop" to the visual as well.

The HC3000U is also handling the room's ambient light well (that's not to say that you can play it with all the lights blazing). And the addition of the dnp Supernova only pumps up

▲ Small in size, big in inputs!

the image even more so – this is now our reference front projection screen.

Better Than Chocolate

Most of the arguments against front projectors in the past have been based on the double-hit of high cost and high maintenance added to the need for mounting on the ceiling or placed on a stand or in a cabinet, where it must be left until the end of time. Mitsubishi's model may be "entry priced," but its HD capability and feature set are good enough to eat and will have you rethinking just how much needs to be spent to get a quality projector. •



Mitsubishi HC3000U
Home Theater Projector
 F/2.4-2.6 with optical iris
 Contrast Ratio 4000:1
 Resolution 1280 x 768/720p

MSRP: \$2,995

Mitsubishi Digital Electronics America, Inc.
www.mitsubishi-hometheater.com