



JVC

DLA-HD1 1080p D-ILA Front Projector

Turf battles in the 1080p front projector market have really heated up since Sony introduced its \$5,000 LCoS-based SXR model last fall. Since then we've seen LCD projectors in that price range arrive from Panasonic, Epson, and Mitsubishi, while Optoma and BenQ have rolled out single-chip 1080p DLP projectors for under \$10K. Another company angling for a piece of the budget-1080p action is JVC. Its new DLA-HD1 projector employs a proprietary version of LCoS called D-ILA (Direct-drive Image Light Amplifier).

The JVC's basic feature set is similar to much of its competition's. A 200-watt UHP lamp can be set for high or normal output, depending on ambient light conditions. The 2.0x zoom lens has a 1.4:1-2.8:1 throw ratio, giving you fairly wide leverage for positioning the projector — with a 100-inch (diagonal) screen, it can be set up anywhere from 9 to 18 feet away. And along with zoom and focus adjustments, there's also horizontal and vertical lens shift.

Notably absent from the DLA-HD1 is an automatic iris function. On most of the competition, this helps boost picture contrast by dynamically varying the light coming off the projector's bulb based on the overall brightness of the image being

displayed. According to JVC, the DLA-HD1's new, improved light engine eliminates the need for a dynamic iris to achieve high contrast ratios — a claim the company effectively backed up in a side-by-side demonstration. The benefit is said to be solid blacks without the sacrifice of brightness in lighter parts of the image that accompanies the use of an iris.

The gloss-black and gunmetal gray DLA-HD1 has an attractive, streamlined appearance. The projector's inputs include two HDMI and component-, composite-, and S-video jacks, along with an RS-232C control port. The lack of a computer VGA input is something of an oversight. Its component-video jack doubles as an RGB input, but repeated attempts to sync up my laptop failed (you can plug a computer into the HDMI inputs, however).

The dim environment required for front projection calls for a suitable remote control, and JVC has delivered a great one here. The keypad is fully backlit and consists of comfortably spaced buttons laid out in a thoughtful arrangement. Buttons at the top provide direct access to each input. The Aspect button toggles between three display modes: 4:3, 16:9, and Zoom, though you're restricted with HDTV programs to 16:9 display. Yet another cool feature

I appreciated was a group of buttons for making on-the-fly color, brightness, contrast, sharpness, and gamma adjustments.

SETUP

I set up the JVC about 13 feet away from an 87-inch wide Stewart FireHawk screen. After selecting the Low lamp power option — which delivered adequate picture brightness in a dark room while minimizing fan noise — I chose the Standard setting for HDMI input level (the other selection, Enhanced, is for RGB signals via HDMI) and Auto for HDMI Video (other selections include RGB and two separate component-video settings), and set the Mask option to Off. The other Mask settings select either 2.5% or 5% overscan — useful if you see noise on the edges of your cable-TV picture. Another feature, Pixel Adjust, helped eliminate a color-alignment problem that showed up mostly as red and blue “fringing” on crosshatch test patterns. This feature allows adjustments of 7 pixels left and right and 5 pixels up and down for red, blue, and green colors in the image. As it turned out, the screen's right side required more tweaking than the left; unfortunately, the JVC's adjustments affect the entire screen area.

The projector offers three “Image Profile” picture presets: Cinema, Natural, and Dynamic. Cinema delivered the most accurate color, and its overall contrast and brightness levels proved adequately

The Short Form

Snapshot

Great picture quality with almost no compromises makes JVC's new projector the budget 1080p model to beat.

Plus

- ⚡ Crisp HDTV picture.
- ⚡ Clean upconversion of standard-def.
- ⚡ Strong contrast and shadow detail.
- ⚡ Flexible installation options.

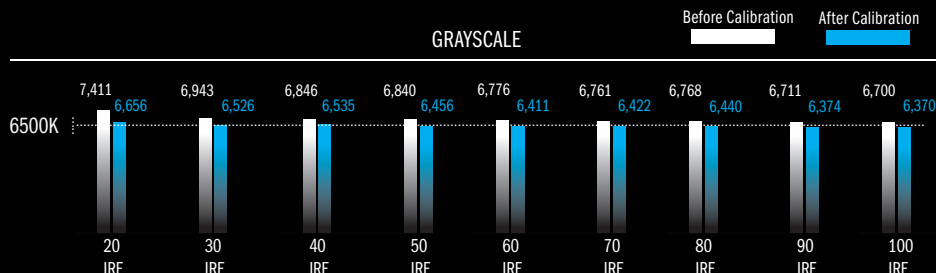
Minus

- ⚡ No VGA input for computer connections.

Price \$6,300

Test Bench

Full lab results at soundandvisionmag.com/jvcfrontpro



With the JVC's Cinema profile and Low color temperature selected, grayscale tracked within ± 443 K of the 6,500 K standard from 30 to 100 IRE — somewhat below-average performance. Adjustments in the User color-temperature menu improved this considerably, resulting in ± 156 K from 20 to 100 IRE. Color-decoder tests showed 0%

error for HDMI, and only +5% red error on the component-video input. Red and blue primary color points measured close to the SMPTE HD specification, though green displayed noticeable oversaturation. Overscan measured 0% for 1080i/p signals with the Mask option off, and the projector fully resolved 1080i/p and 720p test

patterns via HDMI and component video, albeit with a slight rolloff at the highest frequencies. The JVC accepted 1080p/24-fps signals via HDMI. Screen uniformity was very good, with only a slight pinkish tint visible on the far right side of the screen with gray full-field patterns. Standard- and high-def Silicon Optix HQV test discs showed picture softening when noise reduction was applied, although there were no ringing artifacts visible in motion sequences. —A.G.

punchy. The individual picture settings for each Profile can be adjusted to taste, and you also get three additional User Profiles for storing custom settings. With most TVs and projectors, I prefer that each video input have its own User preset to which the display defaults after I switch sources — a system the JVC lacks. However, a full set of “Image Profile” buttons on the remote control made it easy to apply the associated preset after switching sources.

PICTURE QUALITY

After tweaking the JVC's User modes for my sources — HD DVD, Blu-ray Disc, DVD, and high-def cable — I settled back for some quality viewing. When I watched *Hollywoodland* on HD DVD, the projector's crisp 1080p picture easily brought out the texture of the stucco walls on an apartment building where private eye Louis Simo (Adrien Brody) lives. I was even more impressed, however, by a scene in which Simo visits his ex-wife (Molly Parker) at her home. As the broken couple stare out of a sunroom window at their son playing in the backyard, the fine mesh of window screens rippling in the breeze looked both detailed and completely solid.

Several other scenes from *Hollywoodland* served to show off the JVC's excep-



tional color rendition, black level, and contrast. Although the film has a subdued, stylized look that aims to capture the 1950s era in which it takes place, colors like the bright red of a sports car on a sun-drenched street looked vivid and rich. Dimmer scenes, like one where Simo discusses a case in a client's hotel room, also showed a surprisingly wide range of hues. In these shots, both the deep burgundy of a chair and the bright red of the client's lipstick clearly cut through the murky surroundings, and both actors' skin tones looked completely natural as well. But the JVC proved most impressive in dark scenes like one where George Reeves (Ben Affleck) performs his Superman shtick for a camera crew on a set. Its ability to display both deep blacks and a range of shadow details really helped illuminate background objects like camera equipment, fans, pulleys, and the clothing of the onlookers in these and other dark scenes.

Not every source you feed your projector is going to look as good as HD DVD, which is why JVC made a good move in using Gennum's VXP image processor for deinterlacing and upconverting both stan-

dard and high-def signals — a high-quality solution that's gotten our thumbs-up in other gear tests. DVDs and cable TV programs upconverted by the DLA-HD1 generally looked solid and clear. Its noise reduction processing tended to obscure picture detail at high-level settings, however, so I preferred to switch that option off.

BOTTOM LINE

At \$6,300, JVC's DLA-HD1 isn't the cheapest 1080p front projector available, but it definitely ranks with the best in the under-\$10K brood. Its crisp picture, vivid, natural colors, and eye-popping contrast (even without an iris!) make it a must-see option for anyone looking to score an affordable 1080p model. In fact, there are no serious negatives I can apply to the DLA-HD1 other than that I'll soon have to send my review unit back. Rack one up for JVC. **S&V**

Key Features

- 1,920 x 1,080-resolution LCoS display
- 2.0x zoom lens with 1.4-2.8:1 throw ratio
- Manual zoom, focus, and horizontal/vertical lens shift
- Inputs: 2 HDMI, component-, composite-, and S-video; RS-232C
- 17 7/8 x 6 7/8 x 16 1/2 in; 25 1/2 lb

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