

Yamaha LPX-500 projector

Yamaha makes it two from two

By Max Christoffersen

Yamaha LPX-500 LCD projector. \$12,999

If anyone deserves to make a buck from projectors it's probably Yamaha. To be fair, 18 years ago, Yamaha started the audio DSP revolution that in part led to home theatre - but that was just the audio side. And film is more than just sound alone.

What Yamaha really need now is a knock 'em dead cost-effective projector to let dedicated Yamaha fans use a fully branded Yamaha system, from source to speaker and player to screen.

Enter Yamaha projection. Last year Yamaha's first projector the DLP DPX-1 was released to a home theatre market keen to see if Yamaha could make as big a splash in its display technologies as it had in its audio products. The answer, from many who bought the DPX-1, was yes.

And now the LCD LPX-500 joins the family to provide two Yamaha projection options from either side of the digital divide.

Two from two

Both new projectors signal that Yamaha is getting as serious about its visuals as it always has been about its sonics. The LPX 500 is a small, light-weight and easy to use LCD unit featuring widescreen (WXGA) panels and a contrast ratio of 800:1. Throw in Faroudja DCDi processing and, on paper, this is a formidable projector equipped to take on the best - at less than a top of range price.

Out of the box there was a sense of easy satisfaction and smoothness about the image that was very relaxing. The focus and zoom controls located above the lens are easy to use and I found myself just enjoying the image of *Starship Troopers* without any fuss or bother. Good start!

And a quick note: While *Starship Troopers* is dating, I continue to use it because it features deeply saturated blues, high contrast black to white transitional scenes and colour burst (explosions) that can be a torture test for any projector. It is in every sense a test disc (it's great satire too) but it really shows



the best of what projection can do with a good source.

The flyover scene from *Troopers* ('because today I get to drive that') was a treat with fine detail and good black level producing a genuine sense of eye candy! It's not totally three dimensional as a 'walk right in' window on the world, but it is straight ahead fun and one you want to save up for special occasions.

Get synched

But aside from the engaging image quality, one minor quibble is the slow synch times when changing sources. If you're using the LPX500 as a 'one-size-fits-all-TV', for main viewing, you may find the 2-5 second delay in syncing when changing sources or TV channels to be cumbersome. It's not a deal breaker for most, but may be for some - it's the projection equivalent of that annoying rattle in the new car you just can't get rid of.

As always the caveats apply. Lamp life is a healthy 3000 hours (replacement lamps are \$1399) and you'll need one at, or a little before, the recommended lamp life expires. Fan noise while low, is still fan noise and the computer fluoro colour pallet, which shows up as artificially boosted reds, greens and yellows, is still on show.

Sure there is a level of sameness about digital projection, (and it's probably more obvious when you realise this

Yamaha is a re-tuned Epson projector) but overall LCD seems to be maturing further with the performance ceiling limit still some way off.

All in the family

On the great news side, what was pleasing was the totally consistent colour uniformity across the screen, no dead pixels and a total absence of dust blobs. The more recent phenomenon of fixed pattern noise was in evidence although less so than some of its more costly competitors.

This is seldom ever seen on film and is more likely to be seen in pans or colour bursts and white fields. It may be that Yamaha's high quality and rare failure rate in its audio products is crossing over to projection.

Last of all: black level is better than you can expect given its middling contrast ratio (800:1), while screendoor remains the cost of buy-in to LCD projection.

At a normal viewing distance of around 1.5 times the screen width the screendoor will be almost absent except for dynamic colour burst scenes or high light output white fields.

Owners stepping into LCD projection will find this projector a treat to look at if somewhat clumsy at times in use.

But, I doubt that many will be disappointed in the Yamaha - it's a charmer! And it rounds out the family just right.

