# DVDO iScan HD Audio/Video Processor

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**Introduction**

True home theater enthusiasts are always looking for ways to tweak and improve the performance of their systems. If you are among this legion of dedicated videophiles you will want to know about the DVDO iScan HD processor from Anchor Bay Technologies.

The primary function of the iScan HD is to improve image quality on DVD and other standard-definition video sources. It is a small rack-mountable box about the size of a small DVD player that you insert into your system between any video source (DVD player, VCR, satellite receiver, laser disc player, etc.) and your projector. It will take a standard definition signal, process it and upscale it to the native resolution of your projector. If your projector has a DVI input, the iScan HD will deliver the signal digitally, and if not, it outputs analog. Basically, the iScan HD preprocesses the signal and lets you bypass the projector's internal deinterlacing, processing, and scaling electronics. Since the video processing capability of the iScan HD is more comprehensive than that found on most projectors, improved image quality is usually the end result.

**Inputs**

The iScan HD has eight video inputs including two composite RCA jacks and two S-video ports that accept NTSC, PAL, and SECAM signals, two 3-RCA component ports for YPbPr and RGB/S for the processing of 480i, 480p, 576i, and 576p signals and the pass-through of 720p and 1080i signals, one VGA analog passthrough, and one DVI-I input. In addition to the eight video inputs it features four audio inputs—two digital optical and two digital coaxial.

**Outputs**

The iScan will output either via DVI-I or VGA analog in either RGB or component format. Audio outputs include one digital optical and one digital coaxial.

The iScan HD has an attractive and functional onscreen menu and ergonomically well-designed remote control, making it extremely easy to use. And there are a variety of features to take advantage of. Each video input has its own picture controls and associated memory. Controls include brightness, contrast, saturation, hue, Y/C delay, and sharpness. So you can calibrate each of your video sources independently; they are stored in nonvolatile memory and automatically reload each time a particular video source is activated.

Output controls let you choose analog/digital, any standard or custom resolution to match your projector, aspect ratio, sync type, RGB or component, and frame rates at either 48, 60 or 72 hertz to create an optimum interface with the projector.

Another key feature of the iScan HD is what the manufacturer calls "Precision AV LipSync™." This is a digital audio delay that matches audio tracks to the video image onscreen. Since video can sometimes be slightly out of sync with audio due to the time required to process the video signal, the audio delay ensures that lips always move in precise sync with the audio.

**Performance**

The degree to which the iScan HD can improve your projector's image depends upon how good your projector's onboard processing is to begin with. But even with the latest in projector technology, improvements can be achieved. We tested the unit this week with both the Optoma H77 and BenQ 8700, two projectors we happen to be reviewing at the moment. On both projectors the iScan HD rendered a noticeably smoother, sharper, and more three-dimensional image from DVD as compared to the images the projectors were capable of without it. Some of our better quality DVDs were actually improved to the point where they appeared to be HD format. Thus for videophiles who have these projectors and are seeking the best possible DVD performance out of them, the iScan HD is worth the investment.

The iScan HD also does a good job cleaning up images from VCRs. Sharpness is improved and noise is substantially reduced. VHS tape is in general not a good video source for large format projection. But the iScan HD renders tapes that might otherwise be marginal quite watchable by giving you a cleaner and more stable image.

We found the results with standard television to be less compelling. With standard television via satellite we did see a slight improvement in sharpness and stability. However, like VHS tape, television blown up to very large screen proportions never looks particularly good compared to DVD, and the consumer should not anticipate that the iScan HD will deliver a dramatically improved television image. It is slightly better, but still nowhere as good as DVD.

We have not had a chance to test the iScan with a wide variety of projectors. However we would expect that owners of older projectors with less than state-of-the-art onboard processing will see noticeable improvements in DVD, and marginal improvements in non-DVD sources, just as we have seen on these new Optoma and BenQ models.

**Summary**

Perhaps the best way to see if the iScan HD is right for you would be to test it with your own projector. Fortunately, Anchor Bay Technologies makes this easy with a 30-day "No Quibble" return policy. Within 30 days if you need to return it you get a 100% refund, less the cost of shipping, assuming you return it with all parts, accessories, and so forth, with original packaging. So there's not much risk to give it a test drive in your own home.