



Proudly Presents: FIRST LOOK – VIP 3D Theater

April Showers seems to be bringing more than May flowers, as 3D Converters are popping up all over the place (finally). The consumer now has a choice in which box would best fit their home theater needs in converting their 3D ready projectors, to True 3D machines. With all the choices in the field now it's going to be hard to stand out from the pack, unless of course your V.I.P., which stands for Video Innovative Products. V.I.P. has brought a product to the table which claims to turn any display which has a 60 or 120 hz refresh rate into a 3D display. That's right, no more needing a 3D ready device to enjoy the goodness that 3D has brought to the table. Thanks To Jonathan at V.I.P., dfergie and I will be bringing you another Satelliteguys.us first look at the 3D VIP Theater.

I have been very interested in this box since it was first announced, as it seemed to defy any type of normal home theater logic and do the impossible by bringing 3D to the majority of the people who have upgraded their displays in the last 5 years or so without needing a true 3D device. With such a big challenge ahead of them I followed the progress from the start, and so far I have been impressed with the results this box has gotten.

The VIP Theater takes a HDMI 1.4 signal and converts it to a HDMI 1.3 signal that can be passed on to any 60 or 120hz refresh rate displays, making it work with majority of the TV's on the market. It works with most 3D signals out there and auto senses what mode it needs to be in. The hardware of the 3D Theater contains a HDMI in port, sync port, mini USB connection, HDMI out and 6 dipswitches that are for manual adjustments (more on that later). The box also has 3 lights which light for power, HDMI sync, and when a 3D picture is being broadcast it has a 3D light. This box seems to be the best available and can't be beat at \$499. There are some competitors out there that have a price point that matches the 3D Theater, yet have half the specs of this little wonder box.

The Box itself arrived in just some plain bubble wrap. I ordered mine with a pair of DLP-Link glasses as my HD66 uses that method of sync for the 3D signal (see Dfergies review in the second half of this first look to take a peek at another of the three sync options available with this box). The box needs a mini USB cord for power which you can find a USB port on a lot of today's Blu-ray players and Cable boxes. I opted for a continuous power supply and grabbed a old cell phone charger I had laying around the house, and plugged it directly into the wall. The box feeds off a 5v charge and I left mine plugged in all day long without worries of turning it off by unplugging it. The box is a very small box and for me this was perfect as it didn't fit the flow of my theater rack. Because it has a HDMI cord sticking out of both front and back it just didn't have that eye appeal I like, so it was easily tucked behind my devices and you can't tell it's there.



For Testing, I used my theater setup consisting of an Optoma HD66 projected onto a Elite matte white 1.1 gain screen, a Pioneer VSX 820k amp, a Panasonic BDT 110 Blu ray player and a HR23-100 DIRECTV receiver. This box plays by the plug and play rules, meaning plug it in and it should be auto recognized as a 3D device no matter where you put it (They recommend the last thing on your line before the display). I had problems with this setup when I would play a 3D Blu-ray as it would never get a syncable signal. It wasn't until I hooked the Blu-ray player up directly to the 3D Theater that I would get a signal. Doing it that way caused me to lose my HD Audio codecs, but I don't fault the 3D theater as I believe it was my audio receiver that was not playing nicely. I have had others report they have no problems passing it through their audio receiver as well. I never had a problem after getting the box in front of my amp in being detected as a 3D box, and in fact had some of the fastest handshake times that I have seen

when switching off between 2D and 3D signals. Neither the DIRECTV box nor the Panasonic ever hesitated in putting out a 3D signal. Because the way that VIP has this box setup there was no need for me to mess with any dip switches, and the box auto recognized any format I could throw at it with ease.

I popped in Avatar that I knew will give me good reference material. If there was to be any artifacts, ghosting or any 3D problems injected into the picture by this box, this movie will surely point them out as it is a very clean transfer. I noticed once the disc started that the strength in this box was getting everything to recognize that it is a 3D box. Right away the movie started playing in 3D. This was a change from the normal for me as usually I have to wait till the menu and select play in 3D. The movie played flawlessly and I can't speak highly enough of the fact that this box handled it all with ease, and soon I felt like I was getting off the airplane on to the beautiful island of Pandora. First Test passed with no problems.

I wanted to really see if this thing could handle the auto switching of 3D modes and put it through its paces. I flipped on my DIRECTV box and watched a little ESPN 3D, while I also flipped between The Cleveland Indians game. When my DIRECTV box turned on and I flipped it to the 3D channel section there was no waiting for the box to sense if I had a 3D box or not. It gave me the channel options right away. I don't know whether to attribute it to the fact that it was hooked up to a 3D XL and stored it in memory or the 3D theater is that good, but it was instantaneous unlike some of my past experiences. Again, playing the 3D was flawless and because of the strengths of the DLP projector, coupled with this box, there was no ghosting or shadows of any kind. I flipped to the Indians game, and for some reason it stayed in 3D mode as told to me by the light and the fact that it was producing a top and bottom picture. This was fixed by a reboot of unplugging the power supply and rebooting it and I have yet to see that problem reappear in my limited testing of this box.

At the end of the day, this box does a very nice job if you want to use it in a 3D ready setup. It handled everything I could throw at it with ease and worked faster than what I am used to when handing off between the formats. I like the fact that it does have dlp switches in case you need to make any manual adjustments on the 3D mode it's in, and also there is a switch to sync it with a 60hz display which I didn't need. The true strengths of this box lie in the different syncing methods used with 3d glasses, and the fact that it can use majority of the displays out there to produce a 3D picture, which my good friend dfergie got a chance to play with. His thoughts are as follows.

3D VIP Theater

I picked this up then went straight home & hooked directly to my Mitsubishi HC3800 (recommended) from my Av receiver, using a Panasonic BDT 100 player.

My VIP Theater came with the IR emitter and 1 set of glasses (I thought my Mitsubishi IR glasses from my 65" DLP would work, they didn't).

I put in Resident Evil: Afterlife, the VIP recognized it as 3D and I was going... the cable for the emitter is very short and the glasses / emitter interface is very finicky. I used a Cell Phone adapter with the supplied USB cable for power as I've heard using USB power from players is hit or miss.



I had pretty good luck initially but of course the picture is pretty dim (110" diy screen), then moved the BD player & VIP Theater to my HT with a 720p Mitsubishi HC1500 where I had a bright picture, good 3D but flickering (used Despicable Me). Then tried the device with the Panasonic in my RV on a 32" Sanyo 720p set with flickering... I moved back to my BT with the HC3800 and tried the VIP with DIRECTV 3D with variable results (ghosting) from my HR24 -500.

Initial thoughts

- 1) I'm thinking the RF emitter & glasses is the way to go as they are adjustable, plus a 3D ready FPTV will likely achieve much better results.
- 2) Get an extension Vesa cable for the 3D emitter as the one that comes with it is too short.



2nd Try

I took the VIP Theater back to my HT room with the HC1500, then hooked to my Playstation 3 in my 3D room with a long HDMI Cable(PS3 > VIP Theater > HC1500) and a long optical cable (PS3 > Denon Receiver).

Hooked it up the same way to my DIRECTV HR24 -500



Results:

Still getting flickering with the IR glasses, but it is livable, good depth from both sources.

2nd Try with HC3800

Disappointing results connected directly to the Mitsubishi HC3800, from the Panasonic BDT 100 player, the 3D effects were not as good as the 720p HC1500 and has some ghosting. I

haven't tried my PlayStation 3 with the HC3800 yet so maybe I can get watchable 3D with that 1080p FPTV.

Final Thoughts for Now

I will keep my VIP as it does work with the HC1500, I have a HD1000U that I should try in the BT, and it was the predecessor to the HC1500 and should work fine. I will get RF glasses to keep playing with to try and reduce the flicker.

This device should be perfect for 3D ready FPTV's and seems to be more readily available than the Optima 3DXL, so for those that want 3D and have 3D ready sets go for it!

Conclusion:

This box seems to give you a lot more flexibility in the fact that it does enable 60 Hz and 120 Hz displays to display 3D. The problem comes into the fact that the hardware that you have in your current system might not always play like it should. There will always be workarounds, such as putting this device before or after your receiver that will work, that will truly give you the best picture it can. The fact that there are adjustments that can be made with the RF glasses is a huge positive as well. I think this box is a great buy for someone looking into 3D boxes and you won't be disappointed in the build quality and the fact that pretty much any TV in your house can now be a 3D TV!

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