

# VDR-3000

**RATING** 4/5

**Platform:** Mac/PC

**V erdict:** Excellent

**Price:** N/A

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THE DATAVIDEO VDR-3000 IS A STANDALONE DESKTOP RECORDER CAPABLE OF RECORDING IN A WIDE VARIETY OF FORMATS

**M**any people today are looking for a high-quality, low-cost CD creation solution for corporate promotions, educational presentations, personal video use and broadcasting post-production. Commercial and educational institutions need a way to distribute promotional materials in large volumes at low cost. Datavideo has answered these needs with the VDR-3000, which provides broadcast-quality recording on standard CD recordable media that is both inexpensive and easy to duplicate.

Video CD creation, as well as the format's high-quality MPEG-2 counterpart, Super VCD, can be a minefield for novice users. Even with dedicated software at hand, there's a lot to take in, and Mac users especially will feel left out in the cold, thanks to the limited range of software applications for their systems. The VDR-3000 is a set-top recorder capable of recording audio and video to disc in a wide variety of formats: VCD, HQ-VCD, SVCD, CD-DVD and standard audio CD. The unit is standalone and does not require a PC to operate; as the video source is being fed into the unit the CD is cut and there are no lengthy rendering times.

The VDR-3000 has integrated MPEG-1 and MPEG-2 decoding software that is recorded onto all its video formats. VideoCD uses MPEG-1 files and 80 minutes of video can be stored on a single 700 Mb compact disc. SVCD is MPEG-2 based and sports far better picture quality, with a 700 Mb CD good for around 40 minutes of video. CD-DVD is a DVD-type quality image stored on compact disc with around 20 minutes of footage. CD-DVD and SVCD use constant bitrate encoding rather than variable bitrate, with CD-DVDs being encoded at 0.6 Mb per second and SVCD at 0.3 Mb per second. Importantly, discs created with the VDR-3000 can be auto-played back on any PC.

## NEW FORMATS

The Datavideo VDR-3000 can record six formats onto compact disc, including CD/DVD, DVD-Photo, S-VCD, HQ-VCD, VCD and Audio CD. In addition to S-VCD and VCD which are formats used in Asia, Datavideo has created three formats: cdDVD, DVD-Photo and HQ-VCD for video CD creation. The CD/DVD format is similar to the S-VCD format but with full D1 resolution (704 x 480 in NTSC and 704 x 576 in PAL). cdDVD has an increased data transfer rate of 5 Mbps from 2.4 Mbps as with S-VCD in order to increase the output quality of the video.

The VDR-3000 records still images onto CD with up to 98 images per disk at full D1 DVD resolution. Users can play back the disk track-by-track in a DVD player as a slide show on TV. Since the video is transferred to an MPEG-2 digital format, the disk can be played back by any PC or DVD player that supports the S-VCD format. The HQ-VCD format is similar to the VCD format, but



with an increased data transfer rate of 2.4 Mbps as opposed to 1.5 Mbps. This provides great improvement on the mosaic problems associated with fast-action video in VCD recording.

Since the data rate of HQ-VCD is not the same as VCD it cannot be played back by a regular VCD player. HQ-VCD mode limits recording time to about 37 minutes. However, since HQ-VCD remains an MPEG-1 format with acceptable (VHS) video quality, it is playable on any PC or DVD player that supports the VCD format on CD-R/RW. As the MPEG-1 format is used HQ-VCD recording can also be used for Internet streaming.

Finally, the audio CD format is fully compatible with home CD players. CD/DVD is an 'MPEG' digital format on CD, and miniDVD is the same as DVD 'VOB' digital format on CD. The compatibility of the CD/DVD format is much better than miniDVD, due to the fact that there are very few DVD players that can read a VOB format on CD. In terms of image quality, CD/DVD can record at 5 Mbps, which meets the DVD-quality standard data rate of most DVD movies, which are from 4 to 6 Mbps.

Since the CD/DVD format currently does not have a high compatibility rate with many DVD players, Datavideo has integrated MPEG-1 and MPEG-2 decoding software in the system. As mentioned, the decoding software is recorded onto every CD made with the unit. The resultant video disk auto plays in about 10 to 30 seconds after being inserted into the CD-ROM drive - a function that is available with all the video formats.

## THE FINAL WORD

The Datavideo VDR-3000 is a great standalone desktop recorder capable of recording in the widest variety of formats and, as far as we know, it is the only recorder capable of recording at 25 frames per second. The VDR-3000 scores big for the no-fuss transfer of video to CD - and if that's what you want it is one of a kind.

Macintosh users especially, given the dearth of recording software available for that platform, should take a serious look at it. For now it's unbeaten. [www.macrovideo.co.za](http://www.macrovideo.co.za).