



# Casablanca III

## Music and Cinema Controller

Casablanca III's *"open architecture"* design is unique among music reproduction and cinema processing equipment.

Casablanca III's amazing flexibility and upgradeability allow you to custom tailor your system to your individual requirements. Your system can expand and improve; you add the capabilities you want, when you want.

*Truly a no-compromise high fidelity audio component, Casablanca III is a preamplifier/digital to analog converter/ high fidelity video switcher with the power to optimize the performance of your entire system.*

## Casablanca III is Unique

"Audio/Video" systems are not all created equal. Far from it.

The original Casablanca project started in 1995 when home theater became popular. We saw, with considerable alarm, that people were being sold what seemed to us like very large, very complicated multi-thousand-dollar boom-boxes. A/V systems filled rooms with speakers and gizmos, played lots of formats, and didn't seem to be bothering with quality.

In the convergence of home entertainment media, music had taken a back seat to home theater. New technologies poured forth to replace the faithful Hi Fi Stereo System -- too often with systems that deliver performance below standards music lovers had come to expect.

Casablanca is our way of bringing extremely high quality standards together with all of the technologies people want -- in a package so flexible that each Casablanca is custom tailored to be exactly what its owner wants, no more no less. Your Casablanca can change as the times and formats change, and grow as your system grows.

If compromise is not for you, Casablanca probably is.

*"The Casablanca II is one of the most superb pieces of high-performance home theater equipment I have encountered. I use it as one of my own references."*

*"It is a triumph."*

– Anthony H. Cordesman  
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## Getting the Music Right

Home theater systems that dazzle the eye but may not delight the ear have become the norm. All the technologies are there: multitudes of components and speakers, a dazzling array of sources to choose from. The excitement can distract at first from fundamental performance inadequacies. Over time, evenings spent in intimate experiences of music and theater reveal what matters.

Music requires more than decoding all the latest formats. Music requires finesse in control, utmost purity in all signal processing, and real muscle in every gain stage. Movies need more than a flock of surround speakers to create magic. To believe in the movie, you need to be able to believe in the sound.

### Music carries the emotional tone in films.

In tender scenes, visions of joy or sorrow, the subtle musical textures of a flute or whisper of a violin evoke the mood of the moment. More than the occasional blast or boom that punctuates action, these textural details -- woven throughout a film -- convey the feel of a film. Those subtle musical textures are harder to deliver intact than even a really terrific explosion.

### All the sound is important.

When the action starts -- if something does explode -- you will jump a lot higher if the blast is percussive and definite. Dull thuds just don't cut it. Space ships roaring to life, race car engines, and the excited crowd around you in a stadium should all sound distinctly different. They are a big part of the fun!

**It's easy to see why concerts need good sound. But so do the Superbowl, Le Mans, and the Olympics.**

Whether the impact is emotional or more directly visceral, you believe your ears as much as your eyes.

*"The sound from the Casablanca II was dramatically dynamic. This controller delivers an exceptionally wide range of dynamic contrasts. This extended dynamic range really drew me into the experience of films and made that experience far more involving."*

- Richard Hardesty  
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## Theater vs Home Theater

Our aim is not to recreate the experience of being in a commercial movie theater: we would never aim that low.

Our standard was set by live music concerts and by life itself. By comparison, theater sound systems, the main virtue of which is the ability to play very loud, are barely good enough for intelligible dialogue.

In a theater these sonic deficiencies are subordinated to the impact of a really huge screen; the whole experience becomes "larger than life."

Most home-theater systems are on a smaller scale. A more intimate setting, one you may visit every day, calls for more finesse. The low fidelity and harshness of a theater system is much more offensive in a home, up close.

All Theta components are designed to meet the expectations of music lovers accustomed to lucid, transparent home systems that let you listen *through* the equipment, into a you-are-there concert experience.

In order to bring this high standard to home theater, Casablanca even allows you to make corrections for theatrical sound tracks, to make them compatible with higher quality home sound reproduction.

***"...the end result is far better than anything I've heard in a theater.***

*This is particularly true because experimenting with the different crossover options in the Casablanca II has allowed me to...get a far better blend between the main speakers and subwoofers than I have ever had before."*

– Anthony H. Cordesman

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## Sonic Excellence

The cumulative effect of numerous refinements contribute to the sonic excellence of the Casablanca III.

Theta's proprietary Jitter Jail technology virtually eliminates jitter. All digital audio is held in a buffer and reclocked. The resulting rock-stable digital audio suffers none of the problems associated with lesser systems.

For those who value analog sound, the Casablanca III serves as an audiophile-quality analog preamp. You can bypass all the digital processing, sending stereo analog input signals directly to front left and right analog outputs with all the clarity and transparency that made the original Casablanca so highly regarded by audiophiles.

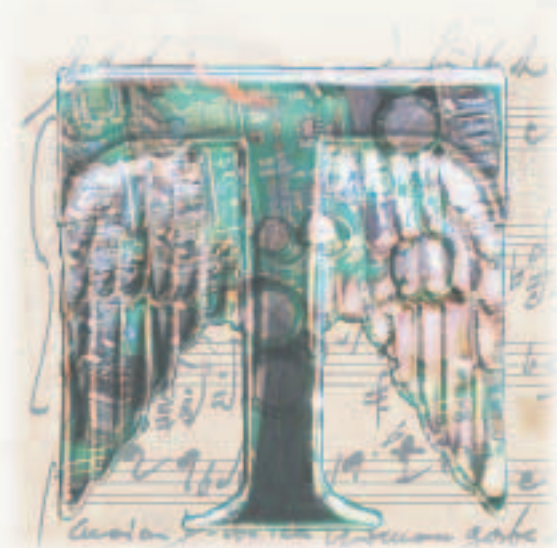
*Casablanca III is in a realm apart from all other AV components.*

Theta is legendary for digital to analog conversion. Theta's faithful reconstruction of digital signals – the science behind the art – will bring you true-to-life excitement from movies, concerts, opera, sporting events, even MTV. You'll experience stunning realism that only Theta can give you.

Casablanca III's broadcast quality video switching preserves visual information with amazing fidelity.

The balanced options are fully balanced, differential throughout the signal path, allowing levels of fidelity, resolution, and freedom from noise and distortion far beyond what is possible with less heroic designs.

Our parts quality is exceptional. Casablanca III's internal shielding, high grade, multiple power supplies, and the sheer number of parts necessary to do the job right – especially for balanced configuration – make the Casablanca III quite massive. To give you a crude measure of the difference, most audio/video components weigh in at 8 or 10 lbs; even the expensive ones. A fully loaded Casablanca III weighs over 50 lbs.



## Volume Control

Casablanca III's volume control is performed 100% in the analog domain!

Digital volume control is simple to implement, but at a cost. It works by throwing away information; "bits" of resolution, which define the sound.

Losing this information means that the quality of sound deteriorates; as you lower the volume level, the quality of sound becomes worse and worse.

Casablanca III keeps all the resolution there is, even when you've turned the sound down to a whisper.

## Flexibility

Casablanca III has the flexibility you need to keep up with changing times.

Casablanca III is a component that music lovers can update and upgrade over time, and a cinema component offering video technology customized to your choices and changing with the times.

Upgrades and additions can be done easily, by a Theta-trained technician.

## Distributed Intelligence: A Crucial Difference

Your Casablanca III is designed to be upgraded, with an absolute minimum of waste.

Casablanca III's key intelligence resides on "daughter boards," rather than being locked into the permanent, central "mother board."

Expensive central processors (like the CPU in your personal computer) become obsolete as new technologies emerge, and as ever-more-powerful processor chips set new performance standards.

## Putting the Proof in "Future-proof"

In the February 1997 issue of Home Theater, Al Griffin calls the original Casablanca

*"the logical choice for a future-proof high-end home theater system".*

Other companies are now making "intelligent" audio and A/V products, using one (currently) powerful CPU.

Manufacturers like to claim that their units are upgradeable. It sounds good. Some "upgrades" mean throwing away everything but the power supply and the chassis. One major company's "upgrade" turns out to be just a trade-in allowance!

*The Casablanca III is a major redesign. We made an enormous number of changes. As is our longstanding policy, we are making the upgrade path fully available to owners of original Casablanca and Casablanca IIs. Earlier units can be made absolutely current.*

Theta has been keeping its promises since 1988.

## The Future

Casablanca III's open structure allows for change, growing and improving with your needs and desires. It allows for implementation of new standards in digital conversion, control, routing and processing. This offers striking advantages to a Casablanca III owner.

While videophiles everywhere are wondering about the trade-in value on their A/V preamp or thinking about who to give their old surround sound processor to, Casablanca III owners will be considering their options: having the lights dim automatically while switching on the screen and power amplifiers; improving the quality of surround sound processing; adding channels or new surround sound modes.

*"The basic architecture of the Casablanca II is about as future proof as any such unit can get."*

– Anthony H. Cordesman  
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## We've got you Surrounded

*New DTS Processing improves sound*

New algorithms released in the final weeks of 2003 give every DTS process better sound than ever before. While these came too late for most of today's processors, which will never have these processes, they are built into Casablanca III's new combined surround processing card. This is a significant upgrade in itself.

*New Pro Logic IIx Surround Processing*

All Casablanca IIIs include Dolby Digital EX and Pro Logic IIx Surround Processing, DTS ES, DTS 96/24 and NEO 6 Processing, and Circle Surround II Processing.

***"The real punchline is that the Casablanca II would have to be my candidate for high end audio-video component of the year."***

**– Anthony H. Cordesman  
© 2000, The Perfect Vision, Issue 35.**



## Fine Tune Your Whole System

Casablanca II can help tailor the sound of your speakers to suit your room!

Every room has different effects on sound; even furniture in the room changes the sound. Your media room is unique. Most speakers are set up for theoretically ideal listening conditions. With Casablanca III's comprehensive crossover options, it's like getting custom-made speakers. Better, actually, because you can adjust, alter, and "tune in" the sound you want.

Casablanca III provides *deep* fine tuning of the sound, through its wealth of crossover choices.

You can save different settings for different sources. For instance, you can set different characteristics for movies and music listening.

You can name each of 12 selection buttons, each with its own speaker configuration and other specific settings, which lets you optimize each parameter for each source.

## Louder isn't Clearer

You're cuddled up on the couch with a good movie, the voices are plenty loud, so why do you have to strain to pick out the words?

Casablanca III has powerful tools to improve the clarity of your whole system. Once your system has been properly tuned, it will give you dialogue that's more intelligible than any other processor can -- on every movie you watch.

This one "secret" alone can make for greater domestic tranquility, as listening levels tend to be lower when you can hear clearly. Your whole family will enjoy movies and music more often, because the distortion that Casablanca gets rid of is just plain irritating. Steering sound to the best speakers is part of the solution.

Even if your installer sets up the Casablanca just once, and those settings are never touched again, the tools are doing their job so the speakers, tuned to your room, use their full potential to deliver sound better than the best movie theater.

# Some Casablanca III Capabilities

## Standard on all Casablanca IIIs:

Digital Input Cards: 6 coax RCA, 3 TosLink, 1 AES/EBU, 1 coax BNC; 2 digital coax RCA digital tape outputs. 2 RF inputs for Dolby Digital laser disc.

Analog input board (6 stereo analog inputs, 2 stereo analog tape outputs).

Twelve channel capability (1. front left / 2. front center / 3. front right / 4. surround left / 5. surround right / 6. side left / 7. side right / 8. front left sub / 9. front right sub / 10. surround left sub / 11. surround right sub / 12. front center sub or center rear surround )

Surround modes: Matrix, Special Matrix, Dolby Pro Logic IIx, Dolby Digital® (5.1, 6.1, 7.1; Dolby Digital EX Discrete, EX Matrix), DTS ES® (5.1, 6.1, 7.1; Discrete, Matrix, 96/24), DTS Neo:6® (Movie, Music), Circle Surround II® (Cinema, Music, Mono Matrix), Stereo, Analog Direct, Analog Matrix, Mono.

Theta's proprietary Center Spread® corrects for theater sound mixes, which bunch up much of the sound in the center channel – great for a vast theater but terrible in a home environment, where the center channel is the weakest. Center Spread enhances the quality and dynamic range of sound while making much better use of your best speakers.

## Tools for deep-tuning your system:

Up to 7 crossover frequencies and up to four slope options available for each speaker set.

Two options for a two-subwoofer setup: left/right or front/rear.

Hi frequency equalization in all channels.

Side channels, with separately adjustable levels and delays.

Full speaker configuration for each input (can help optimize the system for two-channel playback on one input, home theater on another).

*"...no other unit comes close in terms of bass management and crossover features. Its ability to select output boards that provide a wide range of separate crossover types for stereo and rear subwoofers, as well as for the front, side, rear, and center channels, can add a whole new level of accuracy and excitement to almost any state-of-the-art home theater."*

– Anthony H. Cordesman

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## Integration and Convenience

The Casablanca III's standard RS-232 serial port offers access for system-control devices, as well as the ability to update software. It also can be connected to a PC running Theta's CRYSTAL software, which provides complete set-up and control capabilities. Of course, it also comes with an IR remote.

Four 12-volt trigger jacks are provided for controlling power amplifiers, and such auxiliary devices as motorized screens and drapes, and lighting systems.

Casablanca III owners can password-protect the unit's settings.

You select the volume level at which the Casablanca comes out of standby. Choose either a pre-defined level, which you program in, or set it to resume at the same volume level at which it was put into standby.

Master delay (applies to all channels), by input, to match video delay through a video processor (can be up to 110 mSec).

Complete cabling/setup freedom - any jack can be routed to any and every input select button.

Inputs can be given any name you choose.

CRYSTAL software, for fully controlling / setting up the unit from a Windows-based PC.

Ability to download new software: DSP and control system software can be downloaded as a file from the Theta Digital web site to a PC, then sent to the Casablanca III. "TDD" software also lets you save your CBIII setup to your PC so you never accidentally lose your settings.

## Easy To Use

Despite Casablanca III's technological sophistication, we believe in making it as easy as possible for you to use. We think you'll enjoy the intuitive way the Casablanca III works.

## Casablanca III Options

Your Casablanca III can have from 2 to 12 channels, selected from four quality levels of DACs: (a) 4-channel Extreme (balanced only), will process 96kHz sources; (b) 3-channel Superior DAC (balanced and single ended), will process 96kHz sources; (c) 3 Channel Standard DAC (balanced and single ended), will mute on 96kHz source; (d) 6 channel standard DAC (single ended only), will mute on 96kHz source. Cards can be mixed and matched for the channels and quality level that you desire.

Broadcast quality video switching: (a) 3 multi-format video inputs, one multi-format video out (no onscreen display), 6 s-video inputs, 1 main s-video output, 1 tape s-video output; (b) 6 composite, 4 s-video inputs, 1 composite tape out, 1 composite main out, 1 s-video tape out, 1 s-video main out; (c) 8 s-video inputs, 2 s-video tape out, 2 s-video main out. Necessary for on-screen display.

12 channel digital output card, with or without center channel superior DAC (all outputs 96kHz capable). (Yes, you could hook up 6 Generation VIIIs and have all twelve channels at the highest possible quality level).

Tape Out DAC, for recording or sending to a second zone one digital source while listening to another.

The Casablanca III can be housed in an anodized aluminum cover that resists vibration, dissipates heat and esthetically matches the brushed aluminum front panel. It also provides a sonic improvement. You can also rack-mount the unit.



## Your Theta-Trained Dealer

It takes expertise to take full advantage of all the possibilities Casablanca offers, to do the initial set up in your home, and to use Theta's tools to tune your system.

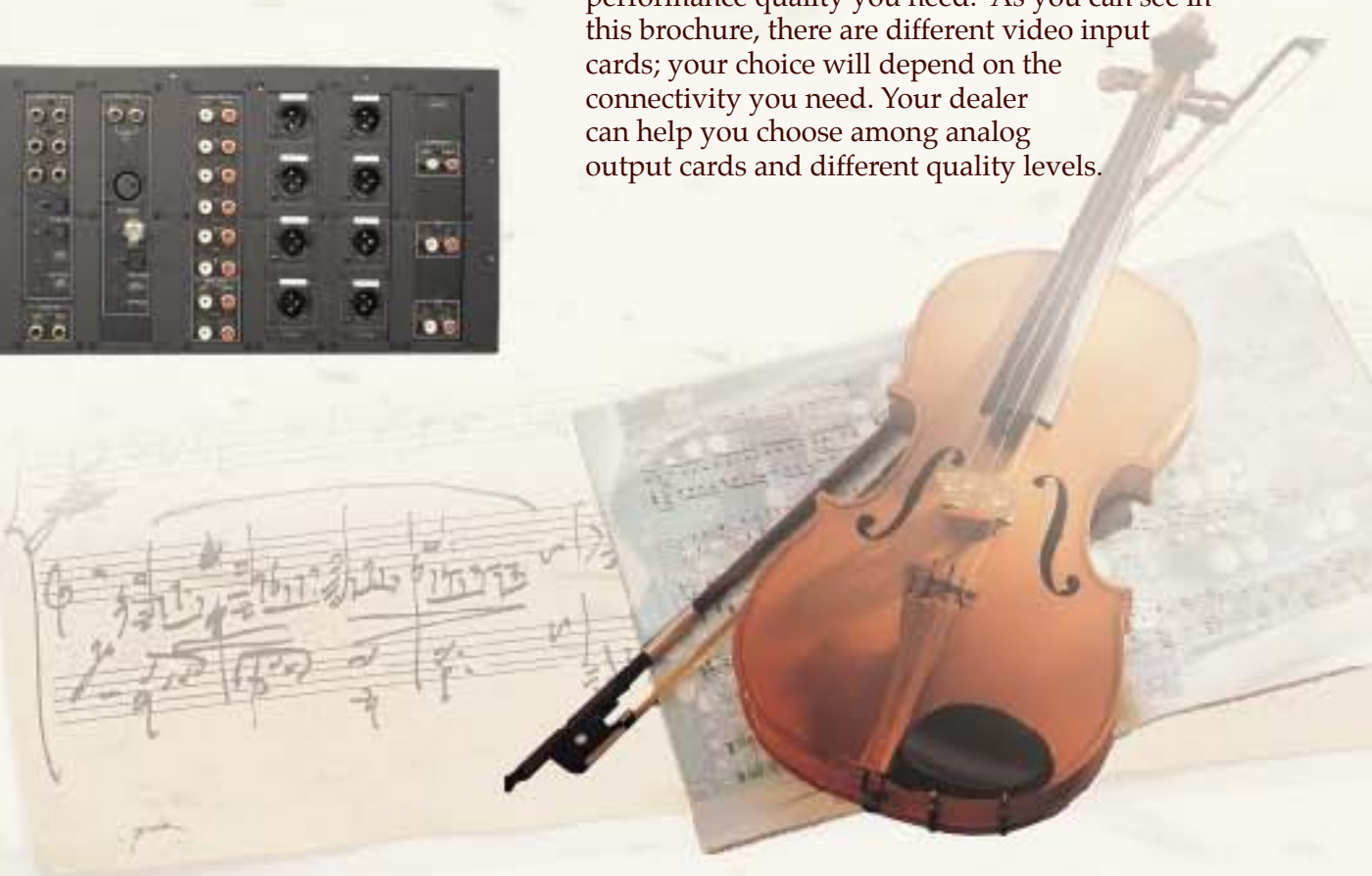
Your dealer is there to help you make the best choices amid all the options for your custom-tailored Casablanca. Your room, your system, and what you want out of your system are unique to you; your dealer will translate all that into enjoyment, without requiring you to become a technician.

The installer who sets up your system has been given intensive training in Theta-specific know-how. This is a requirement for all Theta dealers.

We have chosen our representatives with great care. We don't have a lot of dealers, and we like it that way. We picked people who have exceptional knowledge and skills, people who can get the maximum performance from your Theta gear, and for that matter, from your whole system.

## Customizing Your System

Your dealer will want to talk to you about the number of channels you desire, the type and number of video sources you'll be using, and the performance quality you need. As you can see in this brochure, there are different video input cards; your choice will depend on the connectivity you need. Your dealer can help you choose among analog output cards and different quality levels.



"The flexibility to change, update and modify one of the main components of a home theater system makes a product like the Casablanca II

*a wise investment for any audio/video enthusiast."*

— Lisa Montgomery  
March 2004 "Home of the Month" Electronic House

"...bass...soulful, clear, articulate and resonant. Once again the image is wide, each instrument's position in the soundfield was easily distinguished with a light airy quality. Aside from imaging, what really separates mediocre processors from the sublime is the purity of tonal balance...."

*The Home Theater Experience with the Casablanca*  
"Imagine an insanely detailed microdynamic resolution drawing you to the edge of your seat while extreme dynamics resonate deep inside your chest cavity. You now have had your first taste of how much fun it was to audition movies with the Casablanca."

— Kim Wilson,  
1998 The Audio Revolution

When the original Theta Casablanca was introduced in 1996 it changed the industry's conception of home theatre audio components. The Casablanca became a reference standard for many home theatre speaker manufacturers and equipment reviewers....

The sound from the Casablanca II was dramatically dynamic. This controller delivers an exceptionally wide range of dynamic contrasts. This extended dynamic range really drew me into the experience of films and made that experience far more involving.

The Theta Casablanca II continues a tradition of leadership among an elite group of components which define high-end home theatre today.

— Richard Hardesty

## Theta's foundation: Digital Done Right

Theta invented ways of liberating music from CDs at a time when serious music listeners were in despair, as CDs seemed inherently inferior in sound to their LPs. The earliest Theta processors blazed a trail into better and better digital signal processing. We bring a vast accumulation of knowledge to the realm of home theater, and the same perfectionist standards.

## *Components for the Digital Age*

## **Theta Digital Corporation**

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<http://www.thetadigital.com>

## *"Defining the State of the Art"*

— Anthony H. Cordesman  
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"...you don't need to be Spielberg to notice the gains -- cleaner whites, sharper edge definition. Sonically, too the improvements over lesser processors were vivid. ... listen for crowd sounds, rainfall, and other real-world, enveloping experiences, mainly to hear whether or not it convinces us. The test is this: the better, the more coherent, the more enveloping the sound without gaps, the better the surround-sound experience. It's that simple. ... the Casablanca creates a surround sound experience to savour.... It is a product which we'll learn, in about 10 years' time, was a milestone in early all-digital home cinema. ... Yes, it's that good.

— Ken Kessler  
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*"...it is simply a window to the source."*

"The Casablanca's flexibility to accommodate nearly any room/speaker combination alone makes it worth its weight in gold."

"...Casablanca performed flawlessly."

— Fred Manteghian, Play, May-June 1997

## *Theta Casablanca - The ultimate magic machine*

"...A unit with unsurpassed upgradability. A magic box of tricks that really works."

"It really felt as if I were sitting in a large concert hall...it was like actually being at the concert, with the instruments sounding clear, natural and utterly believable."

— Deon Schoeman  
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## Standard / Optional and Specifications

Theta's technology advances more quickly than printed literature can keep up with: please visit Theta's web site for the most current information on options and specifications, or your Theta dealer.  
Dimensions are 19"W x 16"D x 7 13/16"H.  
A "fully loaded" Casablanca III weighs 52 lbs.