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Monster Cable's Home Theater and Lighting Controller 300

By David Rich

Are you a control freak? Do you have multiple remote controls scattered throughout your home? Then Monster Cable's Home Theater and Lighting Controller 300 (AVL300-S) is your solution. Detailed specifications can be seen at <http://www.monstercable.com/productPagePrint.asp?pin=3368> and the lighting switches at http://www.monstercable.com/mccs/lighting_systems.asp.

Throw away all the remotes in your home because this is the last remote you will ever need. It controls all your equipment, lights and lamps. This unit has both IR and RF transmission abilities thus it will operate any electronic equipment that uses a remote control. With the included Omnilink, the range for the AVL300 is up to 130 feet. So if you are in the upstairs bedroom and want to get the movie room downstairs ready, a few push of the buttons and your movie is cued and the lights are dimmed.

Let's start with the remote itself. It is well designed and buttons are well placed. The feel of the remote is very comfortable in your hand. It has 8 buttons, 4 on either side of the color screen that designate which equipment they control (based on the screen listing which can be changed). The screen is a good size and easy to read. A really neat feature is that when you pick up the remote the backlight comes on due to the built-in motion sensor.

When you first take the remote out of the box you will need to install the Li-Ion battery into the unit and place it on the charging cradle. It is nice to know that you will not have to worry if your batteries are getting weak because when you put the AVL300 down just place it in the cradle and it will keep it fully charged. They will last a few weeks without recharging but you might as well put the AVL300 back onto the charging cradle so it is easy to find.

Once the battery is fully charged, next up is programming. Monster has made this a snap with the included software. Once loaded onto your computer, Mac or PC, the software will walk you through the set up. You pick the components you have from a list. You can even set up multiple systems in different rooms. The most time consuming part of the entire setup is selecting the devices then testing to insure they work properly. The AVL300 has an A/B sys button on the bottom of the unit to quickly change to other rooms. This is a no brainer to set up and use. Once the setup is done on the computer you hook up the remote via the included USB cable and it downloads everything into the AVL300. The program also sets up the lighting control modules so make sure that they are installed in your wall or your lamps are plugged into them.

We installed one of each in the wall light switch and a lamp module. Pairing the switches to the remote is a matter of seconds and Monster has made the process easy.

Now that the remote is programmed and the lighting is paired we were ready to test it all out. Everything worked perfectly. We programmed 2 rooms. In each room there was an A/V surround receiver, DVD player, television, and Tivo unit. What a joy it was not to have several remotes sitting around and to be able to control each system with one remote from anywhere in the home.

The AVL300 is available for \$420 on Amazon.com and the various wall switches run from \$100-\$130. The AVL300 is by far the best remote control system we have ever tested and I expect to give one to a family member next holiday season.