

Marantz SR8001

Chris Martens

7.1-Channel THX Select2 A/V Receiver

As Good As It Gets?

Detail oriented readers may have noticed that the TPV Audio and Video labs have taken turns using Marantz's flagship SR9600 A/V receiver to power their respective reference systems. Frankly, we chose the Marantz because it's a great-sounding component that is, as we said in our original review (Issue 68), "a blockbuster receiver in every sense of the word." The \$4200 SR9600 is a dream component, but at that price it will remain for many of us just that—a dream. But what if I told you Marantz has

created a receiver that comes very close to equaling the performance of the SR9600 flagship, and in some respects actually better it, for *less than half the price*? This, friends, is precisely what Marantz's cool new SR8001 AVR manages to do.

Something for Everyone

The SR8001 is a THX Select2 Certified, XM radio-ready, 7.1-channel receiver that puts out a healthy 125Wpc and sells for \$2000. The THX Select2 rating implies both that the SR8001 meets stringent performance standards and that it includes THX

sound processing features designed to help your home theater meet the sound quality standards of a full-sized movie theater.

The SR8001 provides four HDMI 1.2 inputs and two HDMI 1.1 outputs. The receiver can send audio signals to two remote zones, and a component video signal to one of those two zones.

In principle, then, the Marantz could play a Blu-ray disc in your main home theater room, send an A/V feed from a DVD player to the TV in the kids' playroom, and send an XM Radio program to the sound system in your den—simultaneously. Videophiles will be pleased to discover the SR8001 provides a composite/S-video/component video format converter, as well as a switch-selectable deinterlacer that can convert 480i/576i analog signals for 480p/576p output. The receiver can up-convert analog video signals for HDMI output (though not vice versa), giving older video sources a new lease on life.

Audiophiles will be well served by the SR8001's top-flight (192kHz/24-bit) digital-to-analog converters, "high-power current feedback amplifiers," and purist-oriented SOURCE DIRECT and PURE DIRECT play modes.

The former bypasses bass management and acoustic EQ functions for the cleanest audio signal path possible, while the latter reduces noise by shut-

ting down the receiver's video outputs and front panel display. But the pièce de résistance is the receiver's Audyssey Laboratories MultEQ^{XT} automated speaker setup/room EQ system—a feature the more costly SR9600 does not offer.

Great Sound is Automatic

The MultEQ^{XT} system takes the guesswork out of speaker setup, first guiding users to take calibration measurements from up to six room locations, and then applying

Rather than striving for false clarity or a hyper-detailed sound that might impress in the showroom, the Marantz has the good sense to step aside and let the music speak for itself.

fuzzy logic algorithms to calculate precise frequency and time-response correction settings for each speaker in the system. The end result is uncannily well-balanced sound for every seat in the room. After hearing the MultEQ system for the first time, one TPV staff member observed, "it's almost disorienting to discover that sound quality doesn't change as you move around the room."

MultEQ is sufficiently transparent that you can easily discern qualitative differences between various brands of speakers with the system in use.

The SR8001 provides clean, noise-free video switching functions and a remote control that is a significant improvement over the remote provided with the SR9600. Functions that seemed buried under multiple layers of menu structure in the SR9600 were much more accessible and intuitive to use in the SR8001. Good work, Marantz.

The first movie I played through the



Marantz happened to be *Flyboys*, and from beginning to end my thought was that the soundtrack was in good hands. What I mean by this is that the SR8001 took the film's intricate and demanding DTS soundtrack in stride, never seeming strained or hard-pressed to keep up. On the contrary, the Marantz's precision, finesse, and muscular self-confidence seemed to match the sound designer's vision, move for move.

Sound That Gets Under Your Skin
Sonic details play a huge role in *Flyboys*, and the SR8001 does them real justice. For example, the Marantz perfectly captured the hard, sharp "bang" of the WWI-era biplane engines firing up, and the clattering symphony of mechanical noises heard as the engines roar to life. Later, the SR8001 dramatized the terror and confusion the pilots experienced as they got their first taste of aerial combat, showing how

The Last Word

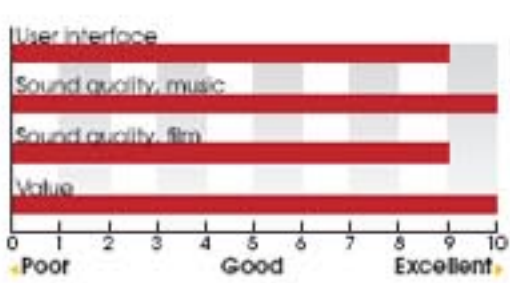
- HDMI 1.2 inputs give most of the good stuff customers need in the here and now (no waiting for HDMI 1.3 to get)
- Takes care of legacy video source components, too
- Sound combines clarity, finesse, and pure muscle
- Cool multizone capabilities
- 720p/1080i/1080p upconversion features would be nice
- Otherwise, what's not to like?

Specifications

- Power output: 7 x 125Wpc @ 8 ohms
- Surround-sound and stereo decoding formats: THX/THX EX; Dolby Digital EX, Digital Pro Logic II and Headphone; DTS/DTS-ES, Neo6, and 96/24; SRS-Circle Surround II and HDCD.
- Video inputs/outputs: Composite video (five inputs, two outputs), S-video (five inputs, two outputs), component video (four inputs, two outputs), HDMI (four inputs—1.2: two outputs—1.1)
- Audio inputs/outputs: Stereo analog (seven inputs, four outputs), 7.1-channel analog (one input, one output), digital audio (seven inputs—four optical, three coaxial; two outputs—one optical, one coaxial), HDMI (four inputs—1.2: two outputs—1.1), XM satellite radio, headphone.
- Other: RS232 control port, IR in/out, Audyssey calibration microphone
- Dimensions: 17.5" x 7.25" x 14.8"
- Weight: 33.1 lbs.
- Price: \$2000

Manufacturer Info
marantz.com

Marantz SR8001 THX Select2-certified 7.1-channel A/V receiver (compared with other \$2k AVRs)



the deadly whistle of machine gun bullets whizzing overhead could be heard even before the German attackers could be seen clearly as they dove down out of the sun. The Marantz also did a beautiful job of conveying the sheer 3D chaos of WWI dogfights, where opposing fighters sometimes avoided collisions by inches—nerve-wracking close calls that viewers sense more by sound than by sight. In short, this receiver helps movie soundtracks get under our skin to trigger deep emotional responses. On music the Marantz proved an equal delight, because its core sound strikes a fine balance between transparency and detail on the one hand, and a powerful yet easygoing and natural-sounding presentation on the other. Rather than striving for false clarity or a hyper-detailed sound that might impress in the showroom, the SR8001 handles textural and transient details with

elegant, understated refinement, while serving up eerily good 3D imaging. More than many A/V receivers, this Marantz can transport you from your living room right into the world of the recording space. I listened to jazz guitarist John Abercrombie, bassist Eddie Gomez, and percussionist Gene Jackson's *Structures* (Chesky, Multichannel SACD) through the Marantz, and was floored for two reasons. First, the SR8001 did a great job with the distinctive timbres and textures of each of the instruments. Second, the receiver created the spooky illusion that the walls of my living room

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had "melted," leaving me to enjoy the master jazz musicians at play within the quiet interior St. Peter's Episcopal Church in New York City—the site of the original recording. One of the joys of owning a receiver this good would be experiencing the signature sounds of far flung recording venues across the globe. Marantz's SR8001 is a superb mid-priced receiver—one geared to please videophiles and audiophiles alike. While the flagship SR9600 may enjoy a slight edge in absolute sonic purity, the SR8001's versatile MultEQ system makes it the better overall choice for many listeners, and at a much more manageable price. **TPV**

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BIC
The wordplay is telegraphic, and consistently witty. Perhaps the BIC's award should be for Cable of the Decade.

KIMBER KABLE
The new Interconnect's have live up to its name: Powerful and Well-balanced.