



Yamaha RX-A3060

The Real Deal

Yamaha's latest audio video receiver flagship, the RX-A3060, bristles with an array of features, functions and technologies that can be almost intimidating. And yet, this AVR juggernaut is intuitive to set up and a joy to use. More importantly, it also delivers an enthralling home theatre experience.



ust how much better can AV receivers get? That question is particularly valid when it comes to Yamaha's Aventure line-up of AVRs, which typically represent the pinnacle of the marque's home theatre offering.

The Aventure range is usually revised annually, with November traditionally the launch month for the updated range. This year is no different. Every year, I approach my first review of the latest Aventure flagship with trepidation.

Why? Well, because the newcomer has to be better than the model it replaces, right? But if the previous model already set the bar at a high level, the scope for improvement shrinks every year, too — or at least, that's what one would assume.

Yamaha's R&D team doesn't appear to be at all intimidated by the standards it sets, and the RX-A3060 is proof that, somehow, it still finds room for improvement, both in terms of the features and facilities offered by the new flagship, and also as far as its audio and video performance is concerned.

At just a smidgen under 20 kg, the



Yamaha feels as sturdy as it looks. The all-metal construction is reassuringly robust, and the receiver is located on five 'legs', the fifth mounted centrally, and acting as an anti-resonance conductor.

Less apparent unless you unscrew the top cover is the reinforced chassis of the amp, with its H-shaped cross-member frame and double-bottomed construction. These also help to address vibration and resonance, benefiting overall performance in the process.

Staying under the covers, the Yamaha engineers have gone to some lengths to ensure the receiver's sonic attributes meet

expectations. The circuit layout makes provision for symmetrically arranged left and right channels that are both physically and electrically isolated in the interests of preventing interference and noise.

Selected circuit components include large-block capacitors, extra large power transformers, Schottky barrier diodes and other parts, Yamaha says. Even the binding posts are selected for optimum performance.

On the video front, the RX-A3060 offers full 4K/UltraHD support at 60 frames/sec, together with HDCP2.2 copyright protection support, HDR Video, and BT.2020 colour gamut pass-through.

Those familiar with the Yamaha Avantage range will recognise the clean, functional industrial design of the RX-A3060. The fascia is kept uncluttered by tucking away much of the ancillary switchgear behind a hinged flap, leaving only a sprinkling of buttons, a large alphanumeric display, and two rotary controllers for source selection and volume.

Under the flap, you'll find an auxiliary AV input set, including HDMI, as well as a cursor controller, preset buttons and a variety of other switchgear, all of which is also provided on the remote control hand-set — so frankly, most users are unlikely to

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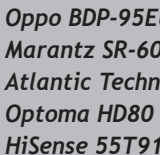
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capabilities also extend to AirPlay, as well as Yamaha's MusicCast system, which can be streamed between a variety of MusicCast-equipped portable speakers to sound-system audio components.

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aha is a 9.2 AV receiver,
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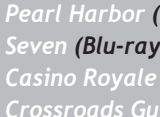
 Oppo BDP-95E

Marantz SR-6003 AV receiver

Optoma HD80 DLP projector

HiSense 55T910UWD 4K curv

11/11/2016



Seven (Blu-ray)

Casino Royale (Blu-Ray)

Crossroads Guitar Festival 2010 (Blu-Ray)

the seven conventional main, surround channels, but also for presence channels, which for Dolby Atmos and DTS:X or as powered speakers in additional zones if required.

the full list of functions and
to several pages – too much
e. Those seeking that level
visit the Balanced Audio
www.balanced-audio.co.za.

sample arrived brand new,
ed in a conventional 7.1

with surround and surround but no overhead or presence test at the time was a 55-inch vivid LED television set, so I was able to check the Yamaha's compatibility with some sample 4K content, which the AVR passed with

The majority of our testing
our regular Oppo BDP-95EU
spinning a variety of Blu-ray
HiSense and our Optoma
g turns to provide the visuals.



Set-up using Yamaha's YPAO 64-bit calibration system was quick and easy. Yamaha provides a makeshift but effective fold-up tripod to ensure the correct positioning of a calibration microphone, which then measures a series of test tones produced by the Yamaha during the set-up cycle.

Unlike many other similar systems, the Yamaha only has to conduct one set of measurements from the typical viewing/listening position, and does so rapidly too. And yet, the results were excellent, requiring very little in terms of subsequent tweaking.

There is also a multiple-position calibration setting, aimed at determining a wider sweet spot for more viewers/listeners, but I found that the single-test setting was more accurate relative to a specific listening/viewing position.

The Yamaha also accurately sensed the size, location and crossover points of the Atlantic Technology loudspeakers, checked the wiring polarity, and set the crossover point for our single subwoofer — although it offers connections for two subs.

Connection to the projector and the television was via HDMI (the receiver has two HDMI outputs, one of which is ARC compatible), and we also hooked up the Oppo via HDMI. By the way, ARC meant that the Yamaha could receive audio digitally from the HiSense without a separate connection.

Talking of audio, and specifically in the context of the Yamaha being a DLNA-compliant renderer, the RX-A3060 is compatible with most popular audio codecs, including high-res FLAC, AIFF and WAV up to 192 kHz/24-bit, and DSD at 5,6 MHz. It will also read ALAC, MP3 and WMA files. And it supports gapless playback.

But back to the really important stuff. Having allowed the Yamaha to run in for a few days (and also to update its firmware in the process, which was a quick and painless affair) it was time to dim the lights, stock up on the popcorn, and watch some movies.

It may be a good few years old now, but *Pearl Harbor* (Blu-ray) remains a vividly portrayed and enjoyable film, with a decent storyline, the backdrop of a major historic event, and some pretty impressive

action sequences.

The battle scene, which starts with Japanese Zero fighter aircraft invading the sleepy naval base, and quickly escalates into a full-blown onslaught of bombs, torpedoes and machine gun fire, is the kind of sonic challenge that makes lesser receivers wilt.

Not so the big Aventure, though: it made the buzz of those Zero fighters sound forceful, almost tactile, as they cut through the air. Explosions had real, physical impact, and I could almost feel the machine gun chatter resonate through my bones.

Directional accuracy was excellent, with the effects seamlessly spread from

left to right, and front to back, creating a very believable, dimensional soundstage that was filled to the brim. The result was utterly involving, demanding the viewer's full attention, while allowing even subtler, finer details to be rendered with accuracy and realism.

I was particularly impressed with the way the often chaotic sonic backdrop was never allowed to encroach on the clarity of the dialogue: when Rafe McCauley (Ben Affleck) and Danny Walker (Josh Hartnett) struggle to get their aircraft into the air, you hear every word of their frantic calls to action.

Mesmerising? You bet — who needs Atmos ...

VITAL STATS

Channels	9.2
Power output.....	150 watts/channel (8 ohms, 20 Hz - 20 kHz, 0,06% THD, two channels driven)
Surround sound formats	Dolby TrueHD, DTS-HD Master Audio, Dolby Atmos, DTS:X
DSP chips	32-bit
Audio DACs	ESS 9006 Sabre32 Ultra
Frequency response	10 Hz — 100 kHz (+0, -3 dB)
Signal-to-noise ratio	110 dB
HDMI inputs/outputs	8/2
Composite video in/out	5/2
Component video in/put	3/1
Stereo RCA inputs	9 (including 1x phono input)
Digital audio inputs	3x coaxial RCA, 3x Toslink optical
Analogue outputs.....	11.2 pre-output set
AV inputs/outputs	5/2
Connectivity.....	Ethernet, 802.11 Wi-Fi, USB, Bluetooth, AirPlay, MusicCast, RS232
Dimensions (WxHxD).....	435 x 192 x 474 mm
Weight	19,6 kg

PRICE..... R 48 880

Verdict

Links one of the most comprehensive feature sets in the AVR arena to a sound that's pacy and incisive, but with a level of authority, control and realism that makes for mesmerising home cinema.

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OUR RATING: 89 / 100





To my mind, Daniel Craig's James Bond has been one of the better, more believable interpretations of the 007 legend, and *Casino Royale* is one of his best, if somewhat underrated Bond yarns.

The opening sequence, where Bond lies in wait of a treacherous spy in his office, and executes him, highlighted the Yamaha's talent for subtlety – it faithfully tracked the deft sonic shifts as the camera angle changes, minutely examining the vocal inflections of the two men, and capturing the tension in the room, while easily switching to the rough and tumble of the flashbacks showing Bond killing another agent in a men's bathroom.

This ability to closely examine every sonic element of the soundtrack, from the loud and obvious effects to far more subtle nuances, was even more convincingly demonstrated in the marvellous crowd scene when Bond and a colleague try to capture a suspect.

Here, the razzmatazz of the frenzied crowd becomes a textured backdrop for the thin, squawky radio dialogue between the agents. In the ensuing chase, that close sonic scrutiny continues as Bond pursues his quarry through a construction site.

Intakes of breath, footfalls, the physical contact of bodies against obstacles, the rumble of concrete mixers and eventually, the near explosive emergence of the bulldozer with Bond behind the wheel are so faithfully, so believably portrayed that you could probably follow the action without the benefit of the visuals.

Later, the scene of the fuel tanker at the airport shows off the same ability to portray the sonic landscape in the finest of details, while making full use of the surround soundstage to create a sense of space and dimension. Throughout, the Yamaha ensured that the dialogue remained clear and focussed, regardless of the intensity of the special effects.

Another golden oldie favourite of mine is the tense, nail-biting thriller, *Seven* (Blu-ray) in which a young Brad Pitt and a gritty Morgan Freeman unravel the murders of a serial killer. This is movie

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thick with dread and menace, fuelled by the dark, grungy urban landscapes and the restless camera.

Against that backdrop, the dialogue is almost disconcertingly crisp, while the effects are presented with a visceral intensity that makes the audience jump. The RX-A3060 made the most of the way the movie involves the viewer, mimicking the close-up and personal cinematography with a sonic treatment that was equally focussed and intense.



Somewhat more pleasurable, and no less entertaining, was the Yamaha's treatment of the *Crossroads Guitar Festival 2010*. On a two-disc set of classic material, one of the stand-out performances is the Tedeschi Trucks Band, together with Los Lobos and keyboard ace Chris Stainton, playing the Joe Cocker classic, 'Space Captain'.

The all-embracing mix isn't dimensionally accurate, but gives a real sense of surround sound, ambience and space. The Yamaha delivered a sound that was not so much wholesome as it was clean and accurate.

It easily dissected the densely layered mix, allowing the listener to follow every performer on stage – and there were a lot of them! The same went for the performance of the blues classic 'Have You Been Mistreated' by Johnny Lang, Ronnie Woods and Buddy Guy: the sound was immediate and engrossing, with much of the sonic focus on the guitar pyrotechnics of this trio – and rightly so!

The Yamaha RX-A3060 is a worthy flagship of the Aventure range – not only because it has every possible bell and whistle you could hope for in an AV receiver, but because its sonic capabilities extract a level of realism and involvement that makes for a riveting movie experience.

Even without the additional engagement promised by Dolby Atmos and DTS:X, the RX-A3060 delivers its wares with enthralling pace and authority. But it's the way the receiver balances that energy and dimension with a real talent for detail and subtlety that makes it stand out from the AV crowd.

It's pretty darn good at making stereo music, too – be it a high-res FLAC file from a NAS on the network, or tracks delivered via AirPlay from an iPhone. Bluetooth works a treat, too – in both directions: the Yamaha can stream to a Bluetooth device like a portable speaker, or receive audio from a Bluetooth device.

So, does the RX-A3060 represent a step forward from its predecessor? Absolutely no question – this one sets the bar even higher.

Deon Schoeman