



# Yamaha WXC-50 & WXA-50



I hope you're all well rested from the Doozie that was last year. I know a lot of people took a hit and times may seem a little dark, but nevertheless, there were some exciting things that happened in the tech world (our world) in the past year – and no, I'm not talking about those cars that spontaneously catch fire, or those smartphones that explode in your pocket.

Instead, I'm talking about the exciting breakthroughs in VR headsets, drone technology and fast fibre installations all over South Africa. Even better, 2017 is shaping up to be just as exciting as I quickly found out with a little help from Yamaha.

We may not all be as up-to-date as we'd like to be when it comes to home audio, but thanks to some ingenuity, the good people at Yamaha have made it a little easier to bring our slightly older systems into the here and now.

The two products under scrutiny here are the WXA-50 wireless streaming amplifier and the WXC-50 wireless streaming pre-amplifier. Both can be connected to a current system as a way of adding wireless and streaming capabilities. Or you can start with the WXA-50 and its amplification options to build a new system from the ground up.

Both units support 'MusicCast', Yamaha's

proprietary multi-room system, giving you the option of either starting or adding to an existing home network. Having both of them on test, I was afforded the opportunity to both add the WXC pre-amp to my existing system and set up the WXA amp on its own to get the full picture.

The duo sports a sleek, minimal and somewhat industrial design with curved edges, black aluminium top covers and solid metal bodies with a grey metallic finish.

The front fascias also share the same layout, with their oversized volume knobs representing a rather charming throwback to old-school hi-fi design. These are complimented by a few small, simple control buttons, as well as three indicator lights for status, Bluetooth and Wireless.



Overall, both components feature a capable, no-nonsense look and feel with excellent build-quality to boot.

The WXA-50 amplifier shines in the connections department with enough options to cover most needs. An Ethernet port provides the option of a wired connection, combined with a switch to turn Wi-Fi off, Bluetooth on, or Wireless and Bluetooth on.

Inputs include Toslink optical digital, USB, and an analogue stereo input set, while output options include a stereo analogue output set, as well as a variable level output for an optional powered subwoofer.

Lastly, there are the speaker binding posts, as well as 12V input and output triggers to allow remote switch-on.

The WXC-50 pre-amp's rear panel is also comprehensively populated. It offers an Ethernet port, the same wireless switching system as the WXA, optical digital and analogue RCA inputs, digital optical and coaxial outputs, a subwoofer output and 12V trigger in and out.

The petite stature of the Yamaha duo makes set-up and placement very easy, especially when adding one of them to an existing system.

Out of the box, both are ready for a conventional horizontal placement, thanks to four rubber feet attached to the bottom. The feet can also be unscrewed, to be replaced by special supports that simply slot into the chassis to allow for a vertical mounting arrangement. For professional applications, the Yamahas fit perfectly into a 1U (19-inch) rack.

Both units come with their own compact remotes, but the true magic of these systems is revealed through the MusicCast app. I've

spoken about this app a few times now, and I've genuinely enjoyed every experience with it.

The app provides control of all connected MusicCast systems, catering for separate music experiences in different rooms, or the same experience throughout a home. It also provides access to some of the most popular online music streaming services, as well as greater control of playback and tonal tuning.

The WXA-50 delivers 70 watts of clean power per channel into 6 ohms. Given its diminutive stature, it is surprisingly confident in a stereo music role. Stereo separation is excellent, while the tonal character is nicely balanced and natural. Oodles of clarity ensure that individual instruments are easily picked out.

Much of my listening for this review was done using Airplay to play MP3s off my laptop, as well as tuning into Internet Radio stations.

Both the WXA and WXC employ a 'Compressed Audio Enhancer', which really helps to get the most out of compressed music stored on smartphones and computers.

Both Yamaha units support high-resolution audio, including AIFF/WAV/FLAC up to 192 kHz/24-bit, Apple Lossless (ALAC) up to 96 kHz/24-bit and DSD up to 5.6 MHz.

As a TV system, the WXA was pretty good, although dialogue was a bit muted compared to the rest of the sound design and soundtrack.

In conclusion, the WXA-50 is a brilliant little audio performer as well as a highly competent wireless and streaming device.

I can't believe the amount of punch Yamaha has fitted into such a small thing. It's a great base for building a compact music and multiroom system.

But, if you're just looking for a way to bring your older system up to speed with all of today's options and functionality, including MusicCast, the WXC is probably a better bet.

Justin Beachcroft-Shaw

## VITAL STATS

### WXA-50 Amplifier

Output power ..... 2x 90 watts  
(6 ohms, 1 kHz, 0,9% THD,  
one channel driven)  
Signal-to-noise ratio ..... 110 dB  
Digital inputs .... Toslink optical digital,  
USB  
Analogue inputs ..... 1x stereo RCA  
Connectivity .... Ethernet, 802.11 Wi-Fi  
Outputs..... 1x stereo RCA  
Network..... DLNA, Wi-Fi, AirPlay,  
Bluetooth  
Weight ..... 1,94 kg

### WXC-50 Pre-Amplifier

Signal-to-noise ratio ..... 112 dB  
Analogue inputs ..... 1x stereo RCA  
Digital inputs ..... Optical digital, USB  
Connectivity ..... Ethernet,  
Outputs..... 1x stereo RCA,  
Toslink optical digital, coaxial digital,  
stereo pre-out, subwoofer  
Weight ..... 1,43 kg

### Verdict

As brilliant as it is compact, the WXA-50 is a truly modern piece of technology. The WXC-50 represents an excellent way to add Yamaha's MusicCast concept to an existing audio system.

### Price

WXA-50 ..... R11 880  
WXC-50 ..... R8 880

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OUR RATING: 80/100

