



Yamaha RX-V581

The RX-V581 is the second of Yamaha's latest 81-generation RX-V receivers to be reviewed in these pages — the first was the entry-level RX-V381, which was evaluated in our August issue. That unit impressed us with its boisterous nature and its strong value — and that's still the case.

However, the RX-V581 offers a lot more in terms of both talent and facilities, for a relatively mild jump in pricing. In other words, if we're talking value, the 581 is an even more tempting buy, even though the sticker price is higher than that of the 381.

Like all of these new-generation Yamaha receivers, the 581 looks sleek and modern, with a crisp alphanumeric display dominating the fascia's upper half, and a fairly minimalist array of switchgear logically arranged below it.

The result is inviting and ergonomically unequivocal, which is perfect for those few occasions that you'll actually select a source of adjust the volume on the Yamaha itself. However, most users will opt for the attractive and intuitive app (for both Android and iOS) which offers an even easier and more attractive gateway to the Yamaha's consid-

erable portfolio of functions and features.

Of course, there's also the remote control handset, which operated in conjunction with a bright, high-res on-screen display, again making full use of the RX-V581's feature set a breeze.

Set-up is quick and accurate, thanks to the Yamaha's so-called YPAO automated channel calibration system, which measures the acoustic properties of the room and the loudspeakers, and adjusts levels and delays accordingly. The process is quick, precise and effective. The upshot of all of this is that you'll be up and running in no time.

The RX-V581 offers decent binding posts for all seven channels, and the list of facilities is extensive. This is a MusicCast-compatible device, which means it can stream content to any MusicCast device on the same wireless network.

Connectivity extends to both Wi-Fi and wired Ethernet, the latter still the preferred network connection if you have any intention of streaming video or high-res audio from a networked storage device. Yes, the Yamaha is DLNA and UPnP compliant.

There's also Bluetooth 2.1 — the

RX-V581 can both transmit and receive content via Bluetooth using the A2DP codec, as well as Apple AirPlay. A front-panel USB slot will accommodate flash storage, and then there's also a terrestrial FM/AM tuner, and a plethora of Internet radio stations.

The Yamaha's video talents extend to full support for 4K UHD, including 4K60p (4:4:4), HDCP2.2, HDR Video and BT.2020 pass-through. Its array of four HDMI inputs and one HDMI output should be sufficient for most home systems.

The RX-V581 is fully compliant with the latest object-based surround formats, specifically Dolby Atmos and DTS:X, while it also offers the latest versions of Yamaha's digital signal processed sound fields, designed to enhance stereo or even mono material. Of course, the current Dolby TrueHD and DTS-HD Master Audio high-resolution digital surround formats are catered for, too.

Talking of high-res, the Yamaha's on-board DACs are capable of dealing with all high-res sound files — including WAV, FLAC, ALAC and more — as well as DSD64 and DSD128.

Set-up was a quick and easy affair, with





the Yamaha's supplied YAPO calibration system used to set up channel levels and delays based on measuring a series of test tone pulses using the supplied microphone. The system also checks for wrong or broken connections.

But for all its features and facilities, it's the sound of this Yamaha that steals the show. These latest receivers are a real step forward in terms of both pace and presence – even in the context of the more affordable versions like the 581.

There's a meatiness to the delivery that makes for a far more realistic presentation of both stereo and surround sound material, linked to a clarity and accessibility that exposes even fine fragments of information.

That combination of muscle and resolution certainly heightens realism, allowing the Yamaha to really get its teeth into both music and movie soundtracks. But its implementation of Dolby and DTS surround formats was excellent, too, creating an expansive, all-embracing sound image that sounded real and immersive.

However, it's perhaps the breadth of this receiver's capability that is its most impressive talent. While you'd expect it to shine with multichannel movie material, its treatment of music was unexpectedly compelling. Running stereo material in Direct Mode with only the assistance of the subwoofer, the sound was open and inviting, with fine imaging and expansive stereo staging.

The RX-V581 always had ample urge to ensure both agility and composure. It brought both big-bang effects and fine musical nuances to the fore, and never sounded pressurised – not even at higher listening levels.

Right now, the RX-V581 represents a particularly sweet spot in Yamaha's latest receiver line-up. It offers most of the important stuff, and does that stuff very well indeed.

From Bluetooth streaming to rendering NAS-based material, from delivering movies in vivid colour and vibrant sound to extracing elusive subtleties from high-res music material – this Yamaha does a fine job, never runs out of steam, and overdelivers in every respect.

Deon Schoeman



VITAL STATS

Channels	7.2
Power output	7x 80 watts (6 ohms, 0,09%THD, 20 Hz – 20 kHz)
Surround sound formats ...	Dolby TrueHD, DTS-HD Master Audio
Object-based formats	Dolby Atmos, DTS:X
Frequency response ...	10 Hz – 100 kHz (+0, -3 dB)
Signal-to-noise ratio	>110 dB
Connectivity	Bluetooth 2.1 + EDR, USB Type A, Wi-Fi 802.11, Ethernet Apple AirPlay, MusicCast, DLNA
Audio file formats	WAV, MP3, WMA, AAC, FLAC, ALAC, AIFF, DSD
HDMI inputs/outputs	4/1
Analogue inputs	3x stereo RCA, 1x Aux (front panel)
Analogue outputs ...	2x Subwoofer out, 1x headphone jack
Digital inputs	2x coaxial RCA, 1x Toslink optical
Video inputs	4x composite
Video outputs	1x composite
Dimensions (WxDxH)	435 x 327 x 161 mm
Weight	8,1 kg

Verdict

Loads of verve and energy, with extensive list of facilities to match. Great control app, too. A class act at a great price.

Price R13 880

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OUR RATING: 85/100

