



Marantz SR8012
AV receiver with HEOS

Up to eleven

The most channel-laden and priciest receiver in this group, the Marantz returns enormous layout flexibility as well as high-quality amplication whether in movie or music mode.

SUMMARY

Marantz SR8012
AV receiver with HEOS
Price: \$5740

- + Excellent overall performance
- + No need for additional amplifiers
- + Great two-channel mode
- + HEOS streaming support
- AVR Remote app relatively flaky compared with HEOS app

Those who watch the annual refresh of AV receivers will know how incremental the changes can be — a new format here, improved calibration there. But the last few years have seen the increasing acceptance of immersive sound formats, and that has brought the need for more amplifier channels able to handle the new height channels. In the Denon review this issue we mention the AVR-X8500H which offers 13 channels, while here we have no lesser brand than Marantz delivering a full 11 channels, so able to provide all you need for 7.1.4 Dolby Atmos or DTS:X sound from a single box.

Equipment

And they are 11 very respectable channels. Each is rated at 140 watts output, full audio bandwidth into eight ohms at just 0.05% THD, two channels driven. All channels also support four-ohm loudspeakers. There's a special set-up function for setting the load impedance to four or six ohms rather than the default eight. For ultimate output levels, if you want to call it that, the amplifiers are rated at 175 watts into six ohms at 1kHz with 0.7% THD.

All those amplifiers mean that you need no additional amplifiers to drive the maximum number of speakers in any Atmos or DTS:X system (short of a small number of truly exotic systems with equipment starting at quadruple the price of this receiver).

But there's enormous flexibility to drive other zones, for example, or to bi-amp other speakers. Many receivers these days let you bi-amp the front stereo pair. How many have the option to bi-amp all five main speakers in a 5.1 system?

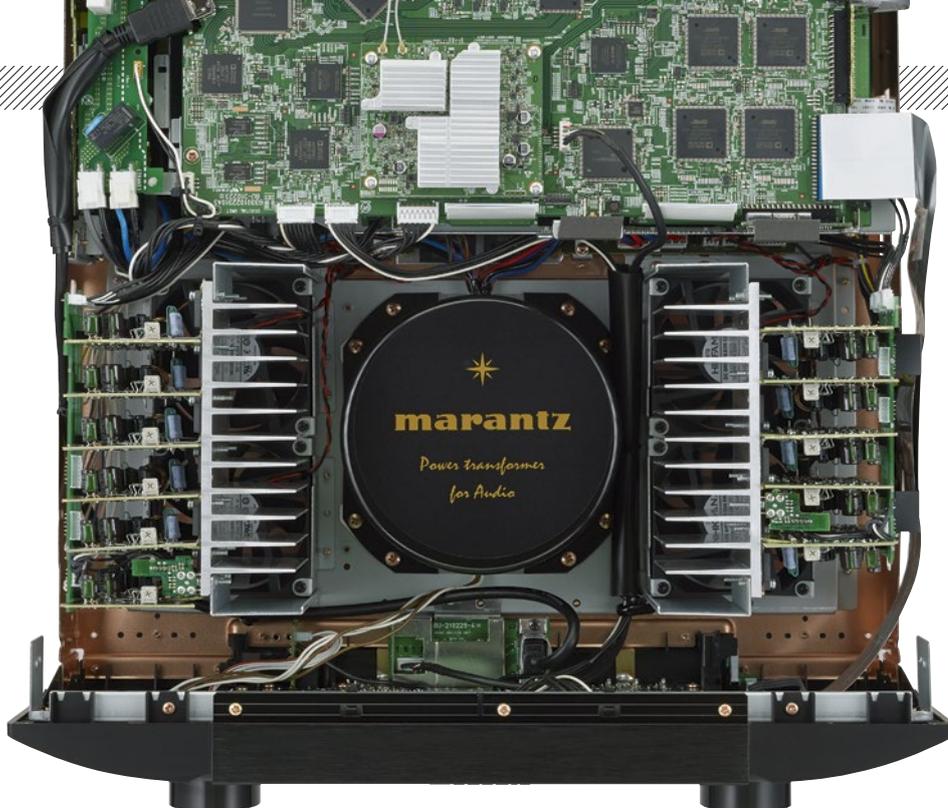
Speaking of channels, we note that although there are two subwoofer outputs, there is no option to split different parts of the signal to them. That is, you can't have one doing left and the other doing right, for example. But even so, the signals are not identical. During Audyssey MultEQ 32 calibration, if you have two subwoofers they'll both be measured and their levels and distances set individually.

Incidentally, if you're a fan of the Auro-3D decoding system, this receiver comes with it installed. One of the oddities of that system is that it uses a "Top Surround" speaker — that is, one speaker in the ceiling right in the middle of the room. Apparently you can't just use regular Atmos ceiling speakers.

If you want to switch between Atmos and Auro-3D, and you've got all the relevant speakers installed, you can use the Subwoofer 2 output to feed an amplifier connected to Top Surround. Yes, clearly there's some fancy signal redirection going on in there.

The connectivity of this receiver is, as you'd expect, first-class. There are eight HDMI inputs (including one on the front) and three HDMI outputs. All the inputs on the back panel support HDCP 2.2 and full-specification UHD video (with things like Dolby Vision and wide colour). So do the three outputs. Two of those outputs are for the main zone. The third is for a second zone.

There are also composite and component video inputs... you know, just in case. Plus plenty of analogue audio inputs (including on the front



◀ A copper chassis and an oversized shielded toroidal transformer take centre stage in the SR8012, with high-current power supply capacitors and carefully selected high-grade audio components including Marantz HDAM modules in Current Feedback topology.

We tweaked some of the crossovers a little, but that was it. And we certainly could have lived with it without those tweaks.

We note that Audyssey has stated that it determines the EQ curves for the full range of speakers, even if it ends up setting them as small. So if you do lower a crossover frequency, the newly handled bit of bandwidth will still be equalised.

The receiver talks you through that calibration. Indeed as with the Denon receiver in the previous review, it can talk you through every step of the set-up. To start, all you need do is plug in power and a TV, and the wizard will cover connecting each speaker, one by one, the Audyssey set-up, the connection of source devices and the connection of the network. If you've chosen Wi-Fi, you can use iOS devices to automate the set-up of this as well. But it's simple enough using the SSID selection plus password approach that households are these days doing all the time.

There are periodic options to skip chunks of the wizard, so you don't need to go through the bits you can handle yourself.

Just make sure that Audyssey Dynamic Volume and Dynamic EQ are switched off at the end. Don't confuse Dynamic EQ with standard Audyssey EQ, which you may well want to use.

Stereo music

Stereo music lovers, there's one other thing you might want to do in the set-up. In the

panel), and coaxial and optical digital inputs. And a moving-magnet level phono input.

There's a front-panel USB socket and, more importantly, both Wi-Fi and Ethernet. The Wi-Fi supports up to the dual-band 802.11n standard. There are two antennas on the back. These double as antennas for Bluetooth as well. Only the basic Bluetooth stereo codec, SBC, is supported.

If you've been a regular reader, you will have noticed that we only talk about the back panel of equipment in the context of its connections. And we never talk about its underside. They are, after all, fundamentally boring things. Well, that's not the case here. All the screws holding things together are copper-plated. The underside is, instead of the usual undistinguished nickel or tin-coated

panel, a beautiful copper panel. On the rear panel nearly all the connectors are gold-plated. Not the HDMI ones, nor system control sockets, but even the mounts for the two WiFi/Bluetooth antennas are gold-plated. We hesitate to use the word, but really it is a thing of beauty.

Performance

Again the Audyssey auto calibration system seems to have been tuned up a bit since the last generation of Marantz receivers. Normally it does everything nicely... except the sizes of the speakers. (With those most calibration systems often seem quite random.) But even though our loudspeaker arrangement is the same as it usually is, this time the auto calibration system got everything very close to right.



Speaker outputs

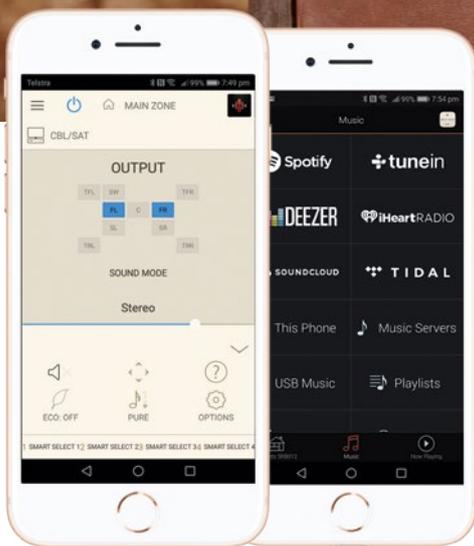
With 11 channels of power, the most ever in a Marantz receiver, the SR8012 can deliver full 7.1.4 Atmos sound — or a wide variety of other configurations.

Inputs

Eight HDMI inputs and numerous audio inputs including turntable and both coaxial and optical digital — check out the gold-plating...

Streaming

There's Bluetooth plus networking via Wi-Fi or Ethernet, which enables HEOS functionality for streaming and multiroom operation.



▲ With so many channels of power, it's only fair you get two apps as well — the AVR Remote app (left) and the perhaps more useful HEOS control app which allows some receiver control along with streaming and multiroom. And HEOS now works with Alexa (see p26).

bottom of the menu in manual speaker configuration settings is something called '2ch Playback'. This lets you set a separate speaker configuration to be employed whenever playing something in two channel direct or stereo modes. So in the normal set-up we set the front stereo speakers to 'Small' with 40 hertz crossovers to the subwoofer. In '2ch Playback' we said that there was no subwoofer, so the front stereo speakers were set to large. We also made sure both speakers were on the same delay time.

That way you can listen to stereo music using only your stereo speakers and not the subwoofer, which is how we usually prefer it. You can also do that by selecting 'Direct' or 'Pure Direct' mode, but those modes also disable EQ. So you have options.

We spent a lot of time with music, both analogue and digital, and movies. The analogue music was from vinyl. The gain on the phono input was perhaps a little lower

than we would have preferred, requiring the volume control to be advanced to quite a high level. But there was no discernible noise from the receiver, so it didn't really matter. But remembering the Denon's ability to use the Input submenu in settings, we checked here, and again you can adjust the level of each source by $\pm 12\text{dB}$. So much for our objection.

We hesitate to say this, because it's kind of controversial, but we'd suggest that it would take a very particular golden ear to even tell, blindfolded, that they were listening to music being delivered by a home theatre receiver rather than an audiophile stereo amplifier.

Movies

As for movies, how about a fine, fun actioner. We watched *Baby Driver*, which combines an excellent music soundtrack with a fine Dolby Atmos surround field. It's especially impressive in the fast car scenes. The authority of this receiver over our loudspeakers was absolute.

The only operational difficulty we found with the receiver was when we had the HDMI Control switched on so that we could use the Audio Return Channel. Whenever we switched on our LG OLED TV, if the receiver was already on it switched to the TV input. We're more used to receivers that only switch to the TV input when we select something in which the TV is the source, like the TV tuner or Netflix.

HEOS and networking

The receiver also does all the important network stuff. In particular it works as a DLNA renderer for Windows/Android folk. And an Apple AirPlay music player for Mac/iOS folk. And a Spotify Connect player for Spotify Premium subscribers. And it has internet radio built in.

All of that stuff worked well. But even more

usefully, it uses the HEOS multiroom platform for this — which is now well-established, spreading beyond its roots with Denon into other brands under the SoundUnited flag, including Marantz as here, and beyond.

The HEOS app was especially handy, as the Marantz AVR Remote app worked, but slowly and a bit flakily. Even if you aren't going full multiroom, the HEOS app gives adequate control, offers more sources and is simply more stable. It was a pleasure to use.

Conclusion

The Marantz SR8012 AV receiver is far from cheap, but that's only appropriate. This is the receiver for the discerning listener, who also wants flexibility, plenty of power, and perhaps Auro 3D. — *Stephen Dawson*

SPECS

Marantz SR8012 \$5740

Tested with firmware: 6130-6271-2151-2144
Power: 11 x 140W (8 ohms, 20-20,000kHz, 0.05% THD, two channels driven)
Inputs: 8 x HDMI, 3 x component video, 5 x composite video, 7 x analogue stereo, 1 x phono, 1 x 7.1 analogue, 2 x optical digital, 2 x coaxial digital, 1 x USB, 1 x Ethernet, WiFi, Bluetooth, AM/FM antenna
Outputs: 2 x HDMI, 1 x component video (assignable), 1 x composite video, 1 x 11.2 pre-out, 11 pairs speaker binding posts, 1 x 6.5mm headphone
Zone: 1 x HDMI, 1 x component video (assignable), 1 x composite video, 2 x analogue stereo, assignable amplifiers
Other: 1 x setup mic, Marantz R/C I/O, 2 x 12 volt DC out, RS-232C, IR in
Dimensions (whd): 440 x 185 x 460mm
Weight: 17.4kg
Warranty: Three years

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