



**Yamaha Aventure
RX-A3080**
AV receiver with MusicCast

Finding a voice

In addition to upgrading its range-topping AV integrated, Yamaha has incorporated voice control using Amazon Alexa.

SUMMARY

**Yamaha Aventure
RX-A3080** AV receiver with
MusicCast

Price: \$2999

- + First-class all-round performance
- + MusicCast platform included
- + DAB+ radio
- + The beginnings of voice control
- Four-ohm loudspeakers support only for front stereo pair

Yamaha's latest top-of-the-line Aventure integrated AV receiver has now dropped. The Aventure RX-A3080 sees essentially the same performance as last year's RX-A3070, but with some welcome enhancements.

Equipment

The amplifiers themselves here appear to be the same that Yamaha has used for a few years. There are nine of them and they're rated at 150 watts per channel into eight ohms, two channels driven. Or 165 watts into six ohms, two channels driven. In both cases that's across the full audible bandwidth at just 0.06% distortion. In the latter case you must select the lower impedance option in the 'Advanced Setup' menu.

As is Yamaha's habit, the front stereo channels also support four-ohm speakers with this setting, but the other channels are limited to a minimum of six ohms. Clearly, that rules out the use of quite a few speaker systems, particularly some European ranges.

But it does provide all you need for Dolby Atmos/DTS:X with 5.1.4 or 7.1.2 channels using the built-in amplifiers. And it has processing for more, so you can choose to upgrade (either now or later) to four over-head speakers in 7.1.4 configuration, by adding two external channels of amplification.

Flexible redirection capabilities are also provided, including the ability to use two of the amps for driving a second zone. Digital audio decoding is handed by ESS SabrePRO ES9026PRO Ultra and Sabre ES9007S DACs.

This year Yamaha has dropped the HDMI input from the front panel, so reducing the total count to seven. But all support the highest current standards. There are two HDMI outputs. Previously one was assignable to a second zone, but this time around there's a dedicated second zone HDMI output.

Still on the front panel is the USB connection and two analogue audio RCA sockets. I hope they stay into the future. A front-panel analogue audio connection is a useful thing to have.

Last year saw the introduction of a pair of balanced XLR analogue audio inputs. This year sees the addition of balanced XLR outputs for the front stereo channels on the 7.2 pre-outs. There are also RCA sockets for those channels.

Yamaha is one of the few companies that includes a DAB+ radio tuner built in (along with FM, but not AM). For streaming it has Ethernet and 802.11ac dual-band Wi-Fi networking, plus Bluetooth with support for the SBC and

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AAC codecs. And there’s Yamaha’s MusicCast platform onboard, which delivers the ability to stream music from internet services under app control, and to work as part of a multiroom network with other MusicCast speakers (and thanks to MusicCast’s ability to broadcast via Bluetooth, also to other brands of Bluetooth speakers within range).

And you will want to get things networked, because included with the receiver here in Australia is an Echo Dot, the smallest of smart speaker and microphone systems that works with the Amazon Alexa ecosystem.

Setting up

There’s no real set-up wizard, as such, with Yamaha receivers, but there’s a mini-wizard on first switch-on, asking you to connect to the network. Which goes to show how very network-centric home theatre receivers are these days. I

chose the Wi-Fi option, and then selected the iOS setup option. You can do it in several other more complicated ways if you prefer. The receiver took maybe 20 seconds before it was ready to start, but once it was ready, it was just a matter of finding the receiver in the iPad Mini’s Wi-Fi settings as a potential AirPlay speaker, selecting it and agreeing to use it. A few seconds later it

was done and the system returned to the same default background that Yamaha has been using for as long as I can remember: a stylish shot of the iron frame of a Yamaha grand piano, delivered at 1080p resolution.

Another mini-wizard guides you through speaker set-up, which is called YMAO, but you have to manually start it by plugging in the calibration microphone. You can measure up to eight positions, or just do one if you prefer. This receiver comes with the tetrahedral measurement rig which allows the receiver to determine the angle of each speaker, in addition to the distance. That should allow more accurate decoding and placement of Dolby Atmos and DTS:X ‘objects’.

YMAO was a bit too kind to my loud-speakers, nice as all of them are. It decided that all but the rear overheads were ‘Large’. After it had finished I went back to manual settings and fixed the sizes and crossovers. While there, I dug around and confirmed that the two subwoofer outputs can act as dual mono, or be set to front and rear, or to left and right.

And if you love your stereo music, consider using the ‘Setting Pattern’ option to create a second Pattern consisting only of front left and right speakers (and perhaps subwoofer). Then you can use Yamaha’s ‘Scene’ feature to switch easily from pure stereo to multichannel with just a single key.

At one point when I pressed the set-up button, the receiver informed me that a new firmware was available (and said it would take about twenty minutes to complete). It only took about nine minutes.

Incidentally, the set-up menu has received the same reworking we noticed with the RX-1080 last issue, the first for several years. If you’re used to Yamaha’s way of doing things, you may take a short time to adjust, but everything is still there. Instructions have been added to help you use the receiver without reference to the manual, although some can be less than informative. For example, you can choose from three DAC digital filter settings (sharp and slow roll-off and low latency). This, according to the on-screen prompts, allows you to choose the filter ‘to have favorite sounds.’

I’m being unfair. How many home theatre receivers do you know that allow this high-end DAC functionality at all?

You can also adjust some settings and controls through a built-web page, although you can’t exercise day to day control this way.

A couple of final things. The receiver switches on ‘YPAO Volume’ by default. That’s one of those supercharged ‘Loudness’ controls. Find it in the ‘Options’ menu and switch it off. To be fair, it’s relatively mild in operation, but still best avoided. It also defaults to nine-



Inputs
Seven HDMI inputs (the front panel one has gone), plus plenty of analogue and digital audio, including a turntable input, and an internal FM/DAB+ tuner.

Streaming
Yamaha’s MusicCast platform allows both streaming and online music services. There’s Bluetooth, AirPlay and DLNA available.

Speaker outputs
There are nine amplifier channels but 11 sets of speaker outputs, allowing usefully versatile connections to switch between Scenes.

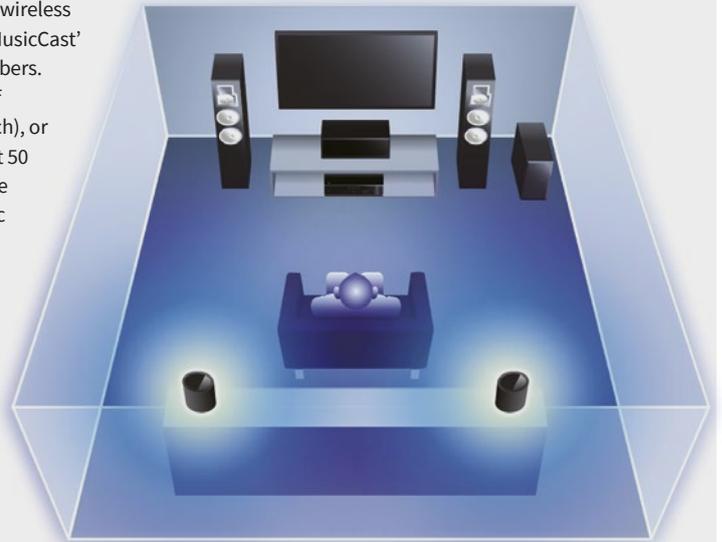
MUSICCAST SURROUND

Yamaha's MusicCast platform has proven one of the most successful at connecting together multiple devices in different rooms for multiroom music playback.

With its receiver ranges this year, the company has extended the system to the movies, connecting together devices in the same room, to enable the AV receivers to connect with wireless speakers.

Other multiroom systems, including Sonos and HEOS, have previously allowed the use of their wireless speakers to supplement the relevant front soundbar product, but Yamaha's implementation of 'MusicCast Surround' with proper AV receivers will allow far more input flexibility, including full HDMI switching, a higher calibre of surround processing and a wider choice of front speaker solutions.

For the rear speakers and subwoofers, Yamaha has released three new wireless speakers, the first to carry the 'MusicCast' tag in their headline model numbers. So for rears you can use a pair of MusicCast 20 speakers (\$349 each), or a single central stereo MusicCast 50 (\$699). Each of these can operate as a standalone MusicCast music speaker, or be incorporated into a surround system either permanently or ad hoc as required for a big movie or for a bigscreen sports experience. To bring up the bass, Yamaha's new MusicCast SUB 100 at \$599 will also connect wirelessly to the Yamaha receivers to complete a surround set-up.



channel stereo on some inputs, including Bluetooth. Once you change it to something sensible the change will stick. Also, look to see if the enhancer function is on. It didn't make much difference, but for reasons of purity, it's best switched off.

Stereo music

I loved the sound using this receiver (once I'd set things aright with choosing the best decoding). Particularly for stereo work. I set up a 'Scene' which would invoke the 'Pattern 2' speaker settings, which I'd set to front two channels only, with no EQ or any other processing.

This should be done — setting up Scenes I mean — because rather than have input selection buttons on the remote, it has eight Scene buttons. (Inputs can still be selected, but only by arrowing through them.) Scenes involve a little extra work at the start, but become super easy to use thereafter. Whether movie or music, the receiver exercised seemingly limitless authority over the speakers, with enormous reserves available.

I remain ambivalent about the new Surround:AI feature, which purports to create the best surround field based on profiles Yamaha has developed. In general I just use Dolby Surround to allow any inherent height information in normal surround audio to be extracted and used.

Network music performed superbly, including the playback of ripped DTS-CDs. Well, normally. That audio went berserk in Pure Direct mode, seemingly being a mixture of undecoded DTS-noise and decoded DTS signal. The receiver supports double-speed and quad-speed DSD, as well as PCM (in the

guise of WAV, AIFF or FLAC) up to 384kHz sampling. The manual says that 384 and 352.8kHz signals are downsampled to half-rate except when Pure Direct mode is in play. It was unclear whether that meant they wouldn't play at all in Pure Direct, but they seemed to.

All the other network stuff worked perfectly. I could use the MusicCast app to send music to the receiver, or my choice of DLNA apps. AirPlay worked. Spotify Connect worked too.

Amazon Alexa? Setting up went smoothly, if rather tediously, with a few sign-ups to the things like Yamaha's 'Connect ID'. You need to do things like that to give Alexa the necessary 'Skill' to talk to the MusicCast app. All that done, being able to do anything useful was hit or miss. I could change the volume — 'Alexa, I'd say, 'ask MusicCast to turn up the volume in the office.' — and the volume would advance (by 8dB!). Likewise, I could ask Alexa to ask MusicCast to switch off the office. But whenever I'd ask Alexa to ask MusicCast to play music 'in the office', it would respond that it couldn't find a speaker called 'the office'.

But I'm no Alexa expert. For the moment, voice control hasn't quite caught up to simply tapping on buttons on an app. But it's a start, and who knows how it might develop. And we hope they (and others) broaden support to Google and perhaps Siri, so consumers don't face a kind of voice-control format war choice.

Video processing

By default the receiver just passes through whatever video it receives. That pass-through included UltraHD at 60p with BT.2020 and HDR, and also UltraHD with Dolby Vision. It

overlays things like the volume control, when you're adjusting it, or the context-sensitive 'Option' menu onto whatever is playing (even 2160p/60). There didn't seem to be an option to switch off the overlay, which is unfortunate. Sometimes you want to be able to change volume without an on-screen indication.

Conclusion

The Yamaha Aventure RX-A3080 continues the tradition of Yamaha's top-of-the-line home theatre receiver: solid performance, fine facilities and satisfying user experience. — *Stephen Dawson*

SPECS

Yamaha Aventure RX-A3080 \$2999

Tested with firmware: 1.09

Power: 9 x 150W (8 ohms, 20-20,000kHz, 0.06% THD, two channels driven)

Inputs: 7 x HDMI, 2 x component video, 4 x composite video, 1 x analogue stereo (balanced XLR), 8 x analogue stereo (RCA), 1 x phono, 3 x optical digital, 3 x coaxial digital, 1 x USB, 1 x Ethernet, WiFi, Bluetooth, FM/DAB+ antenna

Outputs: 2 x HDMI, 1 x analogue stereo (balanced XLR for front left and right), 1 x 7.2 pre-out + Zone 2/3 line outputs redirectable to Front/Rear presence/height, 11 pairs speaker binding posts, 1 x 6.5mm headphone

Zone: 1 x HDMI (switchable between Zone 2 and Zone 4), 2 x analogue stereo, assignable amplifiers

Other: 1 x Remote In, 1 x Remote Out, 2 x Trigger Out, 1 x RS-232C, 1 x calibration microphone

Dimensions (whd): 435 x 192 x 474mm

Weight: 19.6kg

Warranty: Four years (12 months replacement)

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