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Product Review: Harman Kardon AVR260 AV receiver



Product Name: Harman Kardon AVR260 AV receiver
Product Type: AV receiver
Price: \$1199
Reviewed By: Stephen Dawson
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This is a proper seven-channel receiver, with full decoding for everything up to DTS-HD Master Audio and Dolby TrueHD in 7.1 channels. The company specifies the power output as 50 watts per channel at less than 0.07% total harmonic distortion across the full audio bandwidth into eight ohms.

Doesn't sound like much? Well most companies actually quote just the two-channel-at-a-time output. This is Harman Kardon's specification for having all seven channels running at the same time! We occasionally check how well receivers can manage this, and many is the '90' or '100' watt receiver that chokes with seven channels running and is only able to deliver 40 watts per channel. None of that here: this receiver will deliver rated output all day long. In stereo mode, this unit comes to 65 watts (with the same conditions). Although the company doesn't say, we reckon the unit would kick out 90 or 100 watts for those all important dynamic peaks.

Harman Kardon has fitted three HDMI inputs to this receiver, and includes a number of conveniences, such as the ability to set the surround back amplifiers to run Zone 2, triggers and remote control inputs. There is a set of RCA sockets for eight-channel analogue input, should you have some legacy source device, and also 7.1-channel preamplifier outputs.

The receiver also has a good set of front sockets, including both coaxial and digital audio inputs, plus yellow composite video and S-Video, plus audio.

Performance

This receiver comes with Harman Kardon's EzSet automatic set-up feature. This worked in the same way as most, and did a decent job calibrating the speakers and making some EQ adjustments. Whether you retain the EQ is optional, of course. Separate subwoofer crossover frequencies for each channel were available.

No need to engage in equivocations when talking about Harman Kardon sound. Had we a set of spectacularly insensitive loudspeakers, then this receiver may have fallen short. But for the

two sets of speakers we did use, both of which were of roughly average sensitivity, this receiver did an excellent job. It produced clean and extremely loud volume levels, with marvellous control over the sound. All the decoding was delivered smoothly, with quick lock-on to the relevant standard. The unit does not support DSD input, so if you have an SACD player, it will convert to multichannel PCM for delivery over HDMI.

When it came to video handling, this receiver seemed to be more akin to a \$2400 model than a \$1200 one. We've had cause to complain about the last couple of generations of Harman Kardon receivers for silly things, like their insistence on converting 60 hertz video to 50 hertz. There is no problem here.

First, you can have HDMI video completely bypass any video processing and just be sent on its merry way to your display. But selecting video processing is a viable option — and often a very good one — with this receiver. It automatically switches to the appropriate frame rate (i.e. 24, 50 or 60 hertz), and uses very high-quality scaling in converting the picture, whatever its resolution, to 1080p should you wish. The tastefully-designed graphical user interface overlays the video (unless you switch off the video processing by setting the HDMI video handling to 'Through').

But with DVDs delivered at 576i the picture quality was at first simply horrible. Harman Kardon has poorly chosen the defaults for the video settings. You should fix this yourself if you purchase the receiver. Hit the 'Video Mode' setting on the remote. Press 'Enter' until 'Custom' is shown. Select 'Advanced Video Settings'. Arrow down and set 'Deinterlacing' to 'On' and 'Film Mode Detect' to 'Auto' (both are 'Off' by default) and the video processing becomes simply excellent. Both 576i and 1080i were deinterlaced cleanly for the most part, while preserving maximum resolution for the very best picture quality.

We happened to be using a full high-definition \$25,000 projector during this review, and this allowed us to see just how good the video performance of this receiver really was.

Conclusion

Harman Kardon, now that it has eliminated video processing issues, has delivered an excellent home theatre receiver in the AVR260. Unless your loudspeakers are particularly insensitive, you ought to find this receiver a dream device for your system.

HARMAN KARDON AVR260 AV RECEIVER

Price: \$1199

Warranty: Two years

Positive

- Excellent sound quality
- Very good video handling
- High-end features such as overlaid graphics

Negative

- Default settings for video need tweaking

Distributor: [Convoy International Pty Ltd](#)