

# Are you receiving?

Fancy the functionality of an AV receiver but don't want surround channels? **Ed Selley** thinks Marantz might have what you need



**AT FIRST GLANCE**, the Marantz NR1200 looks like another member of the company's successful range of slim-line AV receivers, and shares the exact same dimensions. It has a few extra knobs spread along its front panel, but half close your eyes and you might think it was the seven-channel NR1710 [see HCC #306].

Those knobs (Treble, Bass and Balance controls) give a clue that all is not quite as it seems; the NR1200 is, in fact, a stereo product. But it still might interest film fans.

Covering off the base specs that integrated stereo amp owners will expect, the NR1200 offers 75W per channel, a selection of analogue phono and digital (coaxial and optical) inputs, and a moving magnet phono stage. As befits a receiver, there's a DAB/FM radio section, too.

Yet there are three aspects of the specification that are rather more noteworthy. The first is that the NR1200 can be connected to a network and use Sound United's HEOS platform to play material from network drives or streaming services.

The second is that it has two dedicated subwoofer outputs, with an adjustable crossover that should make using a sub/sat system – or simply bolstering your existing speakers – rather easy.

The final extra feature is the most interesting of the lot.

The NR1200 has five 4K HDR-capable HDMI inputs (HDCP 2.3), and a single HDMI output with ARC for simple connection to a TV. This is, therefore, effectively a two-channel AV receiver, offering (most) of the spec and functionality that an existing AVR owner will be used to, but just with outputs to a pair of speakers rather than five, seven, nine, etc.

Only most of? Yes – there's no onboard multichannel decoding, meaning HDMI EDID data is used to tell your source to downmix (or you can select stereo PCM). Nor is there any form of onboard room EQ.

Much like a modern AVR, though, you get app control alongside a remote, an onscreen display, input assignment/renaming, and even Bluetooth headphone support

Looks-wise, the NR1200 is attractive in a conventional sort of way and while it isn't the most lavishly built device I've seen for £600, it is far from flimsy.

## Return to Spendor

Connecting the Marantz to a 2.1 system – comprising a pair of Spendor A1 standmount speakers and a BK Electronics subwoofer – is completely straightforward, and the NR1200 allows for a 60Hz crossover to be set that makes for a seamless transition between them.

There's no form of virtual surround processing here, but it is surprising how immersive this vanilla 2.1 presentation can be. I spun the first race in *Ready Player One* (Blu-ray), and was placed right in the centre of the madcap action, with the Marantz giving good voice to the soundtrack's fine details, such as the tinkle of coins dropped by players.

## SPECIFICATIONS

**DOLBY ATMOS:** No **DTS:X:** No **MULTICHANNEL INPUT:** No **MULTICHANNEL PRE-OUT:** No **POWER OUTPUT (CLAIMED):** 2 x 75W (into 8 ohms) **MULTIROOM:** Yes. Zone 2 pre-out, plus HEOS **AV INPUTS:** 1 x digital optical audio input; 1 x digital coaxial audio input; 4 x analogue inputs **HDMI:** Yes. 5 x inputs; 1 x output **COMPONENT VIDEO:** No **VIDEO UPSCALING:** No **DIMENSIONS:** 440(w) x 105(h) x 378(d)mm **WEIGHT:** 7.9kg

**FEATURES:** Bluetooth; Wi-Fi; Ethernet; front USB input; headphone output; 2 x subwoofer outputs; AK4458 DAC; DAB/FM tuner; internet radio; FLAC 192kHz/24-bit, ALAC 96kHz/24-bit, WAV 192kHz/24-bit and DSD file playback; control app; crossover control; UPnP renderer; AirPlay

## There's a full-sized output for headphones, plus BT

The signal being sent to the subwoofer is hived off from the two-channel soundtrack, but still sounds muscular and, in the hands of my BK, well defined and controlled.

And despite the absence of a centre speaker, dialogue is fine. With *Elementary*, – my long-time favourite torture test for dialogue – resurfacing on Amazon, it's a logical candidate for the Marantz NR1200. The second season (the worst of the lot) is handled well, and this means that more competently mastered material is clear, detailed and easy to follow. The listening experience is never going to be as effortlessly cinematic as something physically shifting audio around and above you, but it is always enjoyable.

Where the NR1200 gains ground is when you switch back to listening to music. With the budget for amplification spread over two channels rather than five or seven, the results are excellent, both running as a 2.1 system and plain old stereo.

The HEOS interface is queue driven (something I can't say I'm much of a fan of) but it is slick, stable and easy to use. Even the phono stage is perfectly okay for a spot of vinyl use.

That you can do this while still collating your video sources makes the NR1200 unquestionably niche, but very clever too. Considered as a bridge between the hi-fi and home cinema worlds, it has appeal. If you are looking to rationalise your AV equipment without losing the convenience that AV receivers bring, this is a fine place to start ■

## HCC VERDICT



### Marantz NR1200

→ £600 → [www.marantz.co.uk](http://www.marantz.co.uk)

**WE SAY:** The perfect product for those seeking to reduce clutter without losing features – and it sounds good too.

## AV INFO

**PRODUCT:** Network stereo receiver with HEOS and HDMI

**POSITION:** Above Marantz's entry-level PM5005 hi-fi amplifier

**PEERS:** NAD M10; Marantz NR1710