



Arcam AVR300

Arcam's awesome AVR300 amplifier looks set to challenge the giants of the home cinema world.

Armed with seven speaker channels and top specifications and features, it isn't the most affordable home cinema amplifier we've seen. But it delivers 100W to each channel and incorporates Dolby Digital EX and DTS ES Discrete 6.1 decoders as well as Dolby Digital and DTS 5.1.

The front has a neat arrangement of function buttons while the large green display provides useful status information. The amp's styling has a fuss-free air, but it's a bit plain for our tastes and lacks some of the glamour of its rivals. The grey understated front panel is a trademark of the brand's DIVA component range and its DVD-79 DVD player (reviewed in our July issue) complements the AVR300's aesthetics perfectly.

At the back, there's an ample selection of sockets. Arcam has provided just about every type of connection for you to route all of your video and audio sources,

and the AVR300 is flexible enough to become the hub of any home entertainment system. Composite video and S-video signals can even be up-converted and outputted via the component video sockets, meaning just one lead is required to connect the amp to a flatscreen or TV screen. Disappointingly, there are no front panel connections for hookup to external sources.

Suits you sir

Oscreen menus help you to tailor the amp to your particular speaker package, and the large remote handset can also be used to control other Arcam components. Backlit buttons help you to navigate the handset and see what you're doing once the lights have been dimmed, and a natty 'sync' control allows you to compensate for those annoying audio delays that sometimes occur when using flatscreen TVs and satellite TV broadcasts.

Surround sound performance is very respectable, and Arcam's home cinema pedigree is clearly in evidence. Action effects while watching *Aliens - Special Edition*

are dynamic and surround sound steering moves effects around the room from speaker to speaker faster than Sigourney Weaver down a ventilation shaft. Its refined sound is characteristic of the brand, and delivers a smooth sound that is both natural and free from any noticeable flaws in either 5.1 or 7.1 surround sound formations.

Nice pair

If you don't want to take advantage of the amplifier's seven channel capabilities, power can be redirected to the front speakers for bi-amping and audiophile hi-fi sound.

Arcam has a respected musical heritage, and the AVR300 lives up to the brand's quite considerable reputation. Music is handled with finesse and its performance ranks as one of the best sounding home cinema amplifiers we have heard.

The AVR300's impressive capabilities and performance make it one of the best home cinema amps available. Its thoroughbred status is evident from the off, and its appealing sound is as effective with music as it is with movies ■

TEST SCENE

Aliens - Special Edition



The Arcam delivers spacious surround sound effects that leap from the speakers during the final confrontation sequence

PRICE £1,300

www.arcam.co.uk
01223 203200

RATINGS

Style	★★★★☆
Ease of use	★★★★☆
Features	★★★★★
Build	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value	★★★★☆
Overall	★★★★★

WHC VERDICT

A stunning home cinema and music performer with great flexibility, but pricey

WHAT HOME CINEMA 89%

AT A GLANCE

- FEATURES**
 - 7 x 100Watts
 - Dolby Digital EX, DTS ES Discrete 6.1
 - Dolby Pro-Logic IIx, Neo:6
 - AM/FM RDS tuner
- CONNECTIONS**
 - 3x coaxial digital input
 - 3x optical digital input
 - 1x coaxial digital output
 - 1x optical digital output
 - 7x analogue audio input
 - 6-channel input
 - 6-channel pre output
 - 1x component output
 - 3x S-video output
 - 3x composite output
 - 3x component input
 - 5x S-video input
 - 5x composite input



Three Component video inputs

Speaker terminals