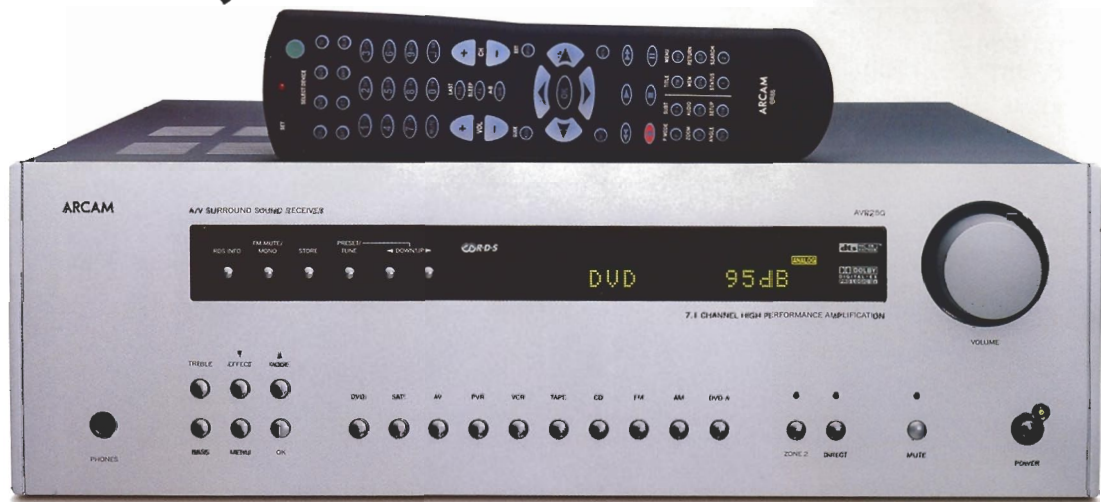


Arcam joins the home cinema elite



A stripped-down version of the excellent AVR300 it may be, but the new receiver still has plenty of processing modes and features to play with. It remains respectably powerful, too

Arcam AVR250 £1000

MULTICHANNEL RECEIVER

FOR
Sensational performance with DVD soundtracks; musical, intoxicating delivery; sublime steering ability

AGAINST
Nothing

VERDICT

At this price, receivers don't get much better than the AVR250: well worth every penny



give the big-name Japanese brands a real run for their money.

The new AVR250 slides in just below the company's five-star, £1300 AVR300. It's been designed with smaller rooms in mind, and the reduced price reflects a slight drop in power (down to 75w per channel from 100w), the removal of preamp outputs (apart from the subwoofer out), and a couple of minor aesthetic changes (no individual input LEDs or 'display brightness' button).

The AVR250 has seven-channel capability and the latest surround processing modes, including Dolby Digital EX and DTS ES. Zone 2 functionality caters for both sound and vision, while the unit can upconvert composite and S-Video signals to component video.

However, unlike many rivals at this price, the AVR250 doesn't have automatic set-up. Instead, you'll have to invest in a decent sound pressure level meter so you can fine-tune the receiver manually. No real hardship.

And, once the AVR250 is up and running, there's a good chance you won't want to turn it off - ever. It positively relishes all types of film, immersing you in everything from gut-busting action flicks to soul-searching tearjerkers. In disaster movie *The Day After Tomorrow*, the Arcam drags you from the comfort of your seat and drops you right in the eye of the storm, whipping the action up into a frenzy. Effects are steered accurately and precisely, creating a seamless and controlled soundfield.

Try CD or multichannel music and you're greeted with similarly impressive results. The AVR250 produces striking detail and resolution for a receiver. Music is rhythmic, with a fine sense of drive. The Foo Fighters' *One By One* DVD-A keeps you rocking to their riffs all day.

Arcam makes some terrific movie-orientated products, and backs them up with a good dose of musicality. That's why the AVR250 is the new benchmark for receivers at this price.

TECH SPECS

POWER 7x75W
DECODING Dolby Pro-Logic IIx, Dolby Digital EX, DTS-ES, DTS NEO:6
DIGITAL INPUTS 3 coaxial, 3 optical
DIGITAL OUTPUTS coaxial, optical
6-/8-CHANNEL INPUTS Both
VIDEO INPUTS 3 component, 5 S-Video, 5 composite
VIDEO OUTPUTS 1 component, 3 S-Video, 3 composite
SIZE (HWD) 15x43x42cm
WEIGHT 16kg

ALSO CONSIDER
Denon AVR-3805
£1000 ★★★★★ August 2004
Musical, intoxicating receiver, with sublime steering ability

Harman Karlon AVR630
£1000 ★★★★★ August 2004
This Harman hits you with a pretty punch, but lacks some subtlety

LET'S PLAY A quick game of 'spot the British manufacturer.' In the current mainstream of affordable home cinema electronics, there's a distinct lack of input from the UK. However, if you look hard enough you'll see that Arcam is starting to

AMPING OPTIONS

If a seven-channel system is too speakers too far, the AVR250 offers a couple of alternatives. You can reassign the power amps for the rear speakers to biamp the front channels, boosting performance. Alternatively, you can use the rear speaker terminals to attach another pair of speakers for a second room.

