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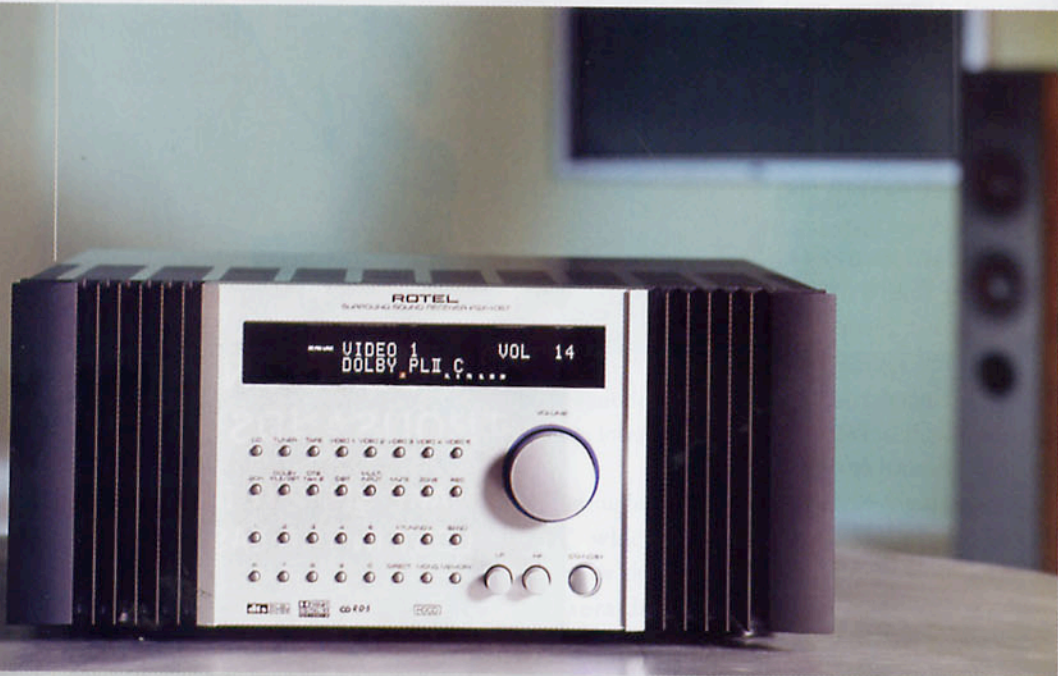
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Rotel RSX-1067 A/V Receiver

Do all 100-watt receivers sound the same?



BY STEVE GUTTENBERG

Rotel's RSX-1067 receiver may not redefine the state of the art, but it's chock full of the latest surround-processing advances, it sounds swell, it's built like a tank, and it even looks like the high-priced component it is. I like it a lot, and I think you will, too.

The Real Deal

That's my mini review, but you want to know more, right? OK, here's the long version: The RSX-1067 outclasses most of its direct competition. Some flagship receivers aren't much more than gussied-up versions of their more-affordable cousins, but the RSX-1067 is the real deal. Its brawny good looks are

a clean break from the routine appliance aesthetic that most competing receivers are saddled with. The RSX-1067's front panel is a model of organization, with two neat rows of input and processing selector buttons, two rows of tuner presets and controls, and just three knobs. You can easily read the large display from across the room. Only the extruded heatsinks that flank the panel are just for show.

A good part of the receiver's 54-pound weight is due to its massive AC transformer and its associated power-supply components. You rarely see this caliber of build quality in a receiver, even in far more costly models. Right behind the front panel is a substantial heatsink that dissipates the heat

generated by seven 100-watt high-current amp channels, without the assistance of a fan. So, yes, the RSX-1067 runs hot and probably won't be happy stashed away in an unventilated cabinet.

Connectivity options are positively generous. The seven pairs of all-metal binding posts are sheathed in plastic to satisfy the Euro safety police's requirements, but I'm happy to report that these connectors can accommodate bulky audiophile speaker cables. You get HDTV/component video switching for up to three sources (with a bandwidth over 200 megahertz); five digital inputs (three coaxial, two optical) and two outs (one each for coaxial and optical); and eight-channel inputs and 10 preamp outputs. Custom-installation facilities are up to snuff, as well. There's an RS-232 port, 12-volt triggers, infrared jacks, and zone-two stereo line-level outputs. Pretty nice overall, but I mourned the lack of a turntable input, a front-panel headphone jack, or front-panel A/V connections. I guess the engineers couldn't squeeze in a set of A/B speaker connectors; however, if (like me) you're satisfied with 5.1 surround, you can reassign the two extra channels to a second room or zone. There's also a covered receptacle labeled "software upgrade," so you at least have a shot at keeping your RSX-1067 up to date.

Surround goodies include Dolby's latest refinement, Pro Logic IIx;

the x refers to the new rear center for 6.1 or, with two rear center speakers, 7.1 surround sound. DPLIIx works its magic with stereo sources, such as CDs, the radio, and DVDs. You also can achieve a somewhat different surround effect with Rotel's proprietary XS processing. Dolby EX and DTS ES, 96/24, and Neo:6 are on board. Rotel is one of the few companies still supporting the HDCD format; that's a good thing because HDCD still sounds great with encoded CDs. If you have a large collection of CDs, you probably have lots of HDCD discs. The RSX-1067 will bring out the best in them.

Luxury touches are evident in the design's details. You can adjust the speed of the up/down volume ramp via the remote or front panel's volume control. The Group Delay feature offers 0- to 500-millisecond lip-sync delay to compensate for video displays that lag behind the audio. I can't think of another receiver that offers this useful feature. The fully backlit remote is identical to the unit supplied with Rotel's RSP-1098 pre/pro. Programming is a manual, one-button-at-a-time ordeal, but it proceeded without a hitch. My only real gripe with the remote is that the power-off button is too close to the volume control, so I occasionally shut down the RSX-1067 when I was trying to increase the volume.

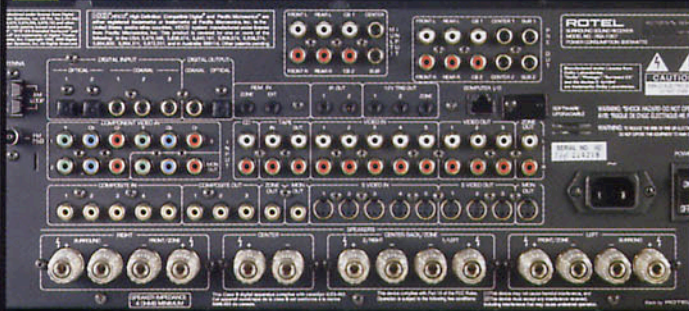
The Nature of the Watt

Now that I've provided a solid overview of the RSX-1067, I'd like to take a little detour and examine an age-old audiophile question: Are all watts created equal? Most of today's \$400-to-\$500 receivers claim 100 watts per channel. So, does this receiver that's more than four times as expensive sound any

better or different than a lower-cost alternative? To find out, I performed a Face Off with a solid \$500 six-channel 100-watt receiver. The \$500 contender sounded pretty darn good on its own—until it faced off against the RSX-1067. With stereo music, the affordable

receiver's soundstage was comparatively dimensionally challenged, and the bass was looser; it sounded small and strained next to the RSX-1067. Once I moved to six-channel operation, the performance gap between the two receivers only grew deeper. While I couldn't

AT A GLANCE ROTEL RSX-1067 A/V RECEIVER



→ FEATURES:

Processing Modes: Dolby: Digital 5.1, EX, Pro Logic IIx
DTS: DTS, ES, 96/24, Neo:6
Other: XS, LPCM, HDCD, MP3, MPEG multichannel

THX Certification: No

Audio D/A Converter: AKM 4315

Number of Amp Channels: 7

Amp Power (per channel): 100 watts, into 8 ohms

Amp Frequency Response: 10 Hz – 120 kHz

Dimensions (H x W x D): 7.5 x 17 x 17

Weight (in pounds): 54

→ CONNECTIONS:

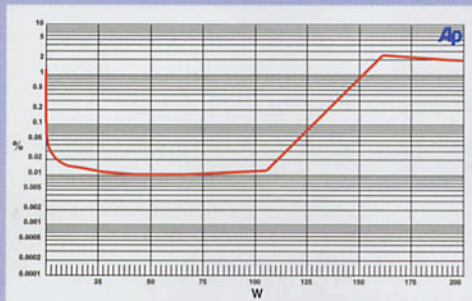
Inputs:
Video: component (3), S-video (5), composite (5)
Audio: coaxial digital (3), optical digital (2), eight-channel analog (1), stereo analog (5)

Outputs:
Video: S-video (3), composite (3)
Audio: coaxial digital (1), optical digital (1), stereo analog (3), preamp (10)

Additional:
RS-232 (1), 12-volt triggers (3), infrared jacks (2), zone-two stereo line-level (1)

→ These listings are based on the manufacturer's stated specs; the HT Labs box below indicates the gear's performance on our test bench.

HT Labs Measures: Rotel RSX-1067 A/V Receiver



- **Five channels driven into 8-ohm loads:**
0.1% distortion at 123.0 watts; 1% distortion at 144.3 watts
- **Analog frequency response in direct mode:**
-0.35 dB at 10 Hz; -0.11 dB at 20 Hz; -0.23 dB at 20 kHz; -1.37 dB at 50 kHz.
- **Analog frequency response with signal processing:** -0.45 dB at 10 Hz; -0.13 dB at 20 Hz; -0.32 dB at 20 kHz; -50.67 dB at 50 kHz.

This graph shows that the RSX-1067's left channel, from CD input to speaker output with two channels driving

8-ohm loads, reaches 0.1% distortion at 127.7 watts and 1% distortion at 151.8 watts. Into 4 ohms, the amplifier reaches 0.1% distortion at 214.4 watts and 1% distortion at 264.1 watts.

Response from the multichannel input to the speaker output measures -0.24 dB at 10 Hz, -0.07 dB at 20 Hz, -0.23 dB at 20 kHz, and -1.35 dB at 50 kHz. THD+N from the amp was less than 0.035% at 1 kHz when driving 2.83 volts into an 8-ohm load. Crosstalk at 1 kHz driving 2.83 volts into an 8-ohm load was -71.16 dB left to right and -77.60 dB right to left. The signal-to-noise ratio with 2.83 volts driving an 8-ohm load from 10 Hz to 24 kHz with "A" weighting was -90.03 dBra.

From the Dolby Digital input to the loudspeaker output, the left channel measures -0.06 dB at 20 Hz and -0.35 dB at 20 kHz. The center channel measures -0.06 dB at 20 Hz and -0.29 dB at 20 kHz, and the left surround channel measures -0.07 dB at 20 Hz and -0.29 dB at 20 kHz. From the Dolby Digital input to the line-level output, the LFE channel is -0.01 dB at 20 Hz when referenced to the level at 40 Hz and reaches the upper 3-dB down point at 111 Hz and the upper 6-dB down point at 118 Hz. —MJP



A Steve's main complaint about the backlit remote control is that the power-off and volume buttons are too close together.

measure either receiver's true power output, the Rotel appeared to me to be more powerful. The differences weren't just limited to more of this and less of that; reverting to the RSX-1067 always got my mojo workin' again. It was more fun to listen to. So the lesson learned yet again was: You get what you pay for. Please don't write angry letters or e-mails about the unfairness of this competition. The point wasn't to belittle the \$500 receiver; I just wanted to make a point about the fallacy of judging sound quality only by the manufacturer's rated power-output number. If you want to hear the luscious sounds of the Ellington band in full swing, you'll need a receiver as good as the RSX-1067.

OK, so the RSX-1067 can clobber a \$500 receiver—no surprises there. I couldn't resist hooking up my Ayre V-6x power amplifier to the RSX-1067's preamp outputs, and this combination really clicked. Every aspect of the sound—but mostly the transparency, sound-staging, and dynamics—improved with the \$9,000 amp on board. So, if the urge to upgrade strikes, the RSX-1067 will provide outstanding service as a pre/pro, and Rotel's RMB-1095 five-channel 200-watt

amp (\$1,999) might be the most obvious starting point.

Performance Perks

My reference system hasn't changed much of late; I'm sticking with my Dynaudio Special Twenty-Five speakers up front; Dynaudio Contour 1.1 speakers in the rear; an REL Storm III sub; and my Denon DVD-2900 DVD player. Ah, but I used my NHT SB-1 speakers as rear center surrounds to test the effectiveness of the RSX-1067's channel-assignable bass and treble controls. The NHTs are softer and mellower than the Dynaudio speakers, so I eased up the RSX-1067's treble control and achieved a very reasonable match between the two speaker brands. Neat.

I started my auditions with the *Magdalene Sisters* DVD. The harrowing film's soundtrack sounded like it was recorded as the cameras rolled. I could hear the acoustic spaces of the churches and the washrooms. The Rotel's resolution was right up there with the very best.

After the *Sisters* DVD, I needed a little cheering up, so I turned to Criterion's *The Complete Monterey Pop Festival* set. The sheer intensity of Otis Redding's joyous soul brought tears to my eyes, and Jimi

HIGHLIGHTS

- Potent sound
- Dolby Pro Logic IIx surround processing
- Jewelry-grade speaker connectors

Hendrix's over-the-top guitar polytechnics raised goosebumps. I've seen the film countless times, but I never enjoyed it more. I wound up watching the entire DVD. If you could measure the value of audio components by the listener's emotional connection to sound, the RSX-1067 would rate an A+.

The Bad Plus is a 21st-century piano jazz trio, and their new CD *Give* gave the Rotel a hot-and-heavy workout. The band plays jazz with full-tilt intensity, and pianist Ethan Iverson's take on Black Sabbath's "Iron Man" will win new converts to jazz. The mighty Rotel never lost its grip on the trio's rock-steady grooves.

No doubt, Rotel's RSX-1067 can serve as the hub of a very fine system. Its upscale build quality, generous features set, and engaging performance may be impossible to beat in its price class. **B**

ROTEL RSX-1067 A/V RECEIVER					OVERALL RATING
Build Quality	Value	Features	Performance	Ergonomics	91
→ A massive AC transformer and a substantial heatsink → Its brawny good looks are a clean break from the bland component aesthetic	→ Most \$2,000 receivers offer far less in every category → Software upgrade-ability ensures longevity	→ Generous connections → Dolby Pro Logic IIx and Rotel's XS processing → Group Delay syncs audio with your video display	→ Sensual sound that will set you free → Excellent resolution → Real-world power delivery	→ Steve didn't love the remote → The front panel is a model of organization → Manual programming takes some time	
94	90	90	92	88	
General information					This mid-priced receiver has the features you need and the high-end performance and build quality you want. If you want to upgrade to separates down the line, it would make a fine standalone pre/pro.
RSX-1067 A/V Receiver, \$2,199 Rotel of America, (978) 664-3820, www.rotel.com Dealer Locator Code ROT					