

Marantz has imbued its slim-line AVR with Wi-Fi and improved connectivity. **Steve May** gets all hooked up

# Space-saving surround sound

**THE NR1605 IS** the latest update to Marantz's increasingly popular slinky AV receiver line. With sales of traditional home cinema amps shrinking faster than the crown jewels of a skinny-dipping Inuit, AV brands have been looking for ways to curry favour with disenchanted cinemaniacs. One solution is to add Wi-Fi and Bluetooth, the other is to embrace a leaner form factor. Here Marantz has done both.

The drive for user-friendliness extends to a simplified handset



A cursory glance might suggest there's not much else to separate this model from its NR1604 predecessor. The chubby-cheeked Marantz cosmetics seem unchanged, matching other separates from the brand. But there are now seven rear-facing HDMI inputs (plus the convenience of an HDMI on the front), so kit builders should be satisfied. There's still only one HDMI output, though. The rear also houses component and composite inputs, stereo audio jacks, and single optical/coaxial digital inputs. Then there are stereo pre-outs for both a second zone and the main stereo pair. Back around the front, a USB port can be used to stream music files from a connected drive.

The receiver now supports 4K/60Hz HDMI 2.0 passthrough via those rear HDMI's, anticipating a time when you'll actually have a 2,160p source, and offers 4K upscaling (to 30Hz) should you not trust your screen to do the job for you. Providing the silicon muscle for this is the new ADV8005 NatureVue video signal processor from Analog Devices. This optimistically includes 4:4:4 colour space support. The receiver does not, however, have HDCP 2.2 copy protection.

Other connections include Ethernet and an M-Xport accessory dock with 6V power output. Speaker binding posts are chunky. System integrators can take advantage of the 12V trigger output.

Of course, the biggest difference from last season's model is the provision of integrated Wi-Fi and Bluetooth, which manifests itself in

the form of dual pop up aeriels. In truth these erections rather compromise the traditional receiver aesthetic, and you may get away with keeping them recessed. That said, the NR1605's Wi-Fi doesn't see 5GHz networks, only 2.4GHz.

The user interface is slicker than an otter's pocket. From the outset, the NR1604 guides you through configuration, gently prompting speaker setup and sources, as well as Audyssey calibration, which comes MultEQ flavoured. This requires multiple position measurements to calibrate levels, distances and related settings. While a cardboard microphone stand contraption is flatpacked, you'll be better off using a camera tripod if you have one (the microphone has a standard tripod bush), as you can measure at exactly the right height for your seating.

## Going on an Audyssey

I'm slowly warming to the versatility of MultEQ. Here, the main Reference setting does a solid job, although I found defeating it altogether can result in a rather fuller and occasionally more exciting sound. James McAvoy's opening monologue to *Filth* (Blu-ray) provides a useful comparator. With Audyssey MultEQ off, he appears to be standing closer to the mic, with MultEQ engaged he physically moves back, his diction seemingly becoming a little clearer.

When the pirate skips make their first approach on Captain Phillips (Blu-ray), Henry Jackman's score picks up tempo, pitter-

