

The difference? My guess would be that the optics of the more expensive projector played a part in this.

I suppose I could live happily with either, but the telling of the tale always ends when I go back to my CRT RPTV, a 64" *Pioneer Elite*, with its sharper picture and greater sense of depth of image. There are definite convenience aspects that come with a really good DLP projector, including variable image size, portability, and compactness, and the *BenQ* qualifies on all counts. But I guess I'm still waiting for the projector that really rings my chimes at a price I can ring up.

Rotel RSP-1098 Surround Sound Processor **Sugg. Retail: \$4495**

**Distributor: Rotel of America, 54 Concord Street,
North Reading, MA 01864-2699 USA (800) 370-3740
(978) 664-3820 FAX 664-4109 www.rotel.com**

I can remember this brand in the days of quadraphonic sound for their monster receivers; they weren't alone, as companies like *Marantz*, *Akai* and others also offered giant 100-pound-plus receivers in the 70s. It was, I guess, rather like all those muscle cars during the same period (is history repeating itself?)

The *RSP-1098* is not an insubstantial component, and is notable for its 6 3/4" LCD screen on the front panel, but it offers preamp/processing only, an outboard multichannel amplifier required to complete the electronics. The colour LCD screen is flanked by a pair of large knobs with small buttons underneath that assign them various functions. All in all, it's a cleanly designed component that is very no-nonsense handsome in brushed aluminum.

The relatively simple front panel belies the complexity of this component. Among its features are 100 MHz video processing to handle HDTV signals, and conversion of composite and S-video signals to component video at the monitor output. But the main functions are audio, with all the bells, whistles, and woo-woos you need for home theatre sonic splendour. These start with "24-bit/128x oversampling analog-to-digital converters from AKM and Crystal Semiconductor 24-bit/192 kHz digital-to-analog converters." There's an analog bypass for "pure 2-speaker stereo with no digital processing", and a "MULTI input for 7.1 channel analog signals from DVD-A and SACD players. Subwoofer options include .1 channel pass through or bass redirect feature with an analog low-pass filter for a summed subwoofer output from seven channels."

All the audio decoding and processing options seem to be here except for THX, which strikes me as a good thing: "Automatic HDCD decoding", "MP3 (MPEG-1 Audio Layer 3)", Dolby Digital, Pro-Logic II, DTS with all ES modes including 96/24 and Neo-6, and "automatic decoding for MPEG Multichannel digital recordings" (this one I hadn't heard about).

In addition, "Rotel XS (eXtra Surround) automatically ensures proper decoding and optimum performance from any multichannel digital signal on 6.1 and 7.1 channel systems, while the unit also offers 4 DSP Music modes. The learning remote will "operate the RSP-1098 and nine other components".

There's also "Multi-zone, multi-source capability with independent input selection and volume", "four assignable 12V trigger outputs for remote turn-on of power amplifiers and other components." The washer, dryer,

and dishwasher options are not spelled out in the owner's manual.

The front panel screen can be used with the onscreen display to set up functions and inputs, which could be handy when dealing with, say, a projector that has to be turned on and off regularly. You could deal with inputs and DVD menus while the projector warms up.

Analog inputs (which are all converted to digital except the Bypass one) include CD, Tuner, and Tape, with an additional 5 sets of A/V in composite and S Video, as well as audio. In addition, 4 component video inputs are provided. For digital audio, 5 coaxial and 3 optical Toslink are offered. This is as complete and versatile an A/V preamplifier as I have encountered. I may have missed some other features and facilities, but you can rest assured that the *RSP-1098* will control a very complex audio/video system.

A key to this is the remote control, which is a component



in itself. With a small LCD display at top, it is not a forest of buttons, there being 42 in all on the front, and a side button that backlights all these and the LCD display. It will control numerous components, and could be used to run a whole home theatre system when programmed, and has the flexibility to do so, with buttons to select 5 different video components in addition to those labelled AUD, CD, TUN, TAPE, and EXT.

The *RSP-1098* is a very good sounding component, and its LCD display is excellent, ranking with my portable *Pioneer PDV-LC20* DVD player in picture resolution and colour quality. One peculiarity, however, was that it seemed locked in anamorphic mode, stretching all 4:3 pictures to fill the screen. I never did find a way to fix this problem.

But as an audio or video processor, it was a real winner, and the screen was handy for dealing with menus and other other setup situations, especially when dealing with front projectors. It's not cheap, but it's also an investment in your home theatre system for the long term.

Yamaha RX-V1400 7-Channel Receiver

Sugg. Retail: \$1299

**Distributor: Yamaha Music of Canada,
135 Milner Ave., Toronto, ON M1S 3R1
(416) 298-1311 FAX 292-0732 www.yamaha.ca**

It was London Audio's Rick Ho who commented to me, in a phone conversation, what a good value and innovative receiver the *RX-V1400* is. Its main claim to fame is automatic self-calibrating of all main functions for 7 channels of audio. This system is called "Yamaha Parametric Room Acoustic Optimizer for Automatic Speaker Setup", otherwise acronymed as YPAO.

Features include all the Dolby surround formats, DTS ES, NEO 6, and 96/24, along with Yamaha's own DSP