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08> **ULTIMATE BLU-RAY** COULD PIONEER'S TANK-LIKE BDP-09FD BE THE BEST BLU-RAY PLAYER EVER?

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AS THE TOP-OF-THE-LINE RECEIVER IN THE NEW 15 SERIES, THE **ROTEL RSX-1560** LOOKS AND SOUNDS THE PART.

> BY GEOFFREY MORRISON



Well, it looks huge. Maybe not huge, but certainly hefty. And yet at 38 pounds, it's not. There must be some kind of magic in there doing something.

Don't Call It Digital

Inside the RSX-1560 is a 7-channel Class-D amplifier, and a pretty powerful one at that. Rated at 100-watts per channel into 8 ohms, Rotel claims an even more impressive 200 watts into 4 ohms. Amplifiers should double their wattage when you halve the impedance,

but most don't. Most companies don't volunteer this rating.

A Class-D amplifier, unlike a more traditional Class-A or A/B amplifier, switches its transistors on and off at a very fast rate. By not having the transistors "on" all the time, the theory is that there is less energy wasted as heat. Less wasted heat means fewer heat sinks and assorted equipment, resulting in a lighter and more efficient product overall, hence the 38 pounds. That's not to say it doesn't generate heat. Like just about all modern electronics, the RSX-1560 needs room to breathe.

Silver is the New Black (But there's black too)

With the new 15 Series, Rotel has a new aesthetic to their line, as you see here. The brushed metal finish is classy and appears very high end.

Setup can be done on the front screen, or via your TV. The setup menu itself isn't much to look at, but it has all the setup features you need, and, perhaps more importantly, the OSD is output via HDMI (you'd be amazed on how many receivers it isn't). It's after setup where there's a stumbling block.



The class-D amplifier in the new Rotel RSX-1560 is rated at 100 watts for each of its seven channels. It also decodes, scales, and transcodes just about everything.

Perhaps it's Apple's fault, but I have an expectation that I can plug in a product, pick up the remote and be able to use or at least figure out 90 to 100 percent of its features without reading the manual. Seeing as this is exactly how most consumers will interact with the product, I don't feel this is the least bit unreasonable. With the RSX-1560, I almost had to get the manual just to figure out how to get sound out of it. Which is, you know, the whole point of a receiver. In other words, you should definitely have your custom installer set this up for you (and Rotel expects you probably will).

The biggest issue is the remote. The, shall we say, "husky" remote is very 1980's, save the blue back-lighting. I had some issues with the remote, but Rotel claims to have fixed this going forward. The buttons aren't exactly laid out in the most logical fashion, but then I feel this is the case with most receiver remotes. Thankfully, the RSX-1560 can be controlled with RS-232, so

you have plenty of options to use something else.

Everything else about the receiver makes up for the ergonomic nightmares, though.

Beefy Brute

There is a fullness to the sound of the RSX-1560 that is welcome in my house; a solidness in the mid-range that gives movies and music a real punch, with plenty of power in reserve to make transients really pop. One of my favorite tracks to test this is Paco De Lucia's "La Barrosa" on his *Live in America* CD (also found on the eternal Burmester *Demo CD Nr.2*). From the fierce flamenco guitar work, to the percussive clapping and stomping, this is a master at his best. The RSX-1560 does this track's fiery nature justice.

Even with all speakers going, I didn't have a problem getting the volume to well higher than neighbor-recommended volume.

Like nearly all current receiv-

ers, the RSX-1560 decodes the latest audio formats like Dolby Digital Plus, Dolby TrueHD and DTS-HD HR and MA formats. While these new formats aren't a night-and-day difference over Dolby Digital, the decrease in compression over Dolby Digital/DTS is noticeable and welcome. The RSX-1560 decodes without a hitch, and the lossless formats in particular are a treat for the ears.

The days of receivers only "receiving" audio are long gone. The RSX-1560 also has a full suite of video processing. It will transcode and upconvert SD signals from composite and S-video and SD and HD signals from component up to 1080p via HDMI. De-interlacing 480i is done quite well, with 3:2 being picked up quickly. There are minimal jaggies on diagonal lines. Scaling is also quite good, with a fair amount of detail pulled from the original material. Overall, the best scaling DVD players will do a slightly better job, but not by much.

Oddly, it won't de-interlace 1080i over HDMI; it just passes it through, just like 1080p and 1080p/24. It also does not pick up the 3:2 sequence with 1080i sources over component.

Gold from Silver

There are countless receivers on the market, but few really deserve consideration from audiophile types. Ergonomic quirks aside, the RSX-1560 does a fantastic job with both audio and video. Movies really pop with the strong, punchy, mid-range. Perhaps the best added bonus with the RSX-1560 is that it looks as good as it sounds. And it looks really good.

HE

PRICE/CONTACT

PRICE: \$2,599

CONTACT: 978.664.3820, rotel.com