

# Convenience personified

**O**n a recent press trip to the heart of Yamaha in Hamamatsu Japan, yours truly was awakened to the scale of the electronics giant that is Yamaha. However, what is less apparent to those of us outside of Japan, is the company's vast and impressive musical heritage. In fact, "electronics giant" are inappropriate words to describe this diverse, musically rooted company...

The fact of the matter is that Yamaha derives over 67% of its nett income for the sale of musical instruments. Personally, I was aware that Yamaha made some instruments, but not to this kind of scale. In retrospect, it all makes sense when one sees what is going on behind the scenes in a manner of speaking.

We were taken on a factory tour of the brass and wood wind instruments factory, and a further unforgettable highlight – a tour of the piano making factory. It was impressive, and what was perhaps most surprising was just how hand-made these products are. Each piano, for instance, is hand assembled and the attention to detail is utterly unbelievable. The Japanese take great pride in their work and this is immediately evident in their products, with every individual Yamaha piano tuned to what the workers affectionately call the 'Yamaha sound', the 'right sound'.

It's a little humbling to realise that Yamaha derives two thirds of its revenues from the sale of the very things that we as audiophiles try to reproduce electronically in our own environments.

Long standing readers will know that I have always been a Yamaha fan because I have always enjoyed the natural approach that the marque has consistently adopted towards music. I have always found Yamaha kit to be able to deliver music the way I understand music and have always attributed this to my unique listening experience with my unique set of ears.

However having now seen the tight integration between musical instrument engineering and manufacture with the A/V division, it's perfectly obvious as to exactly how Yamaha is able to generate the musicality that they do.

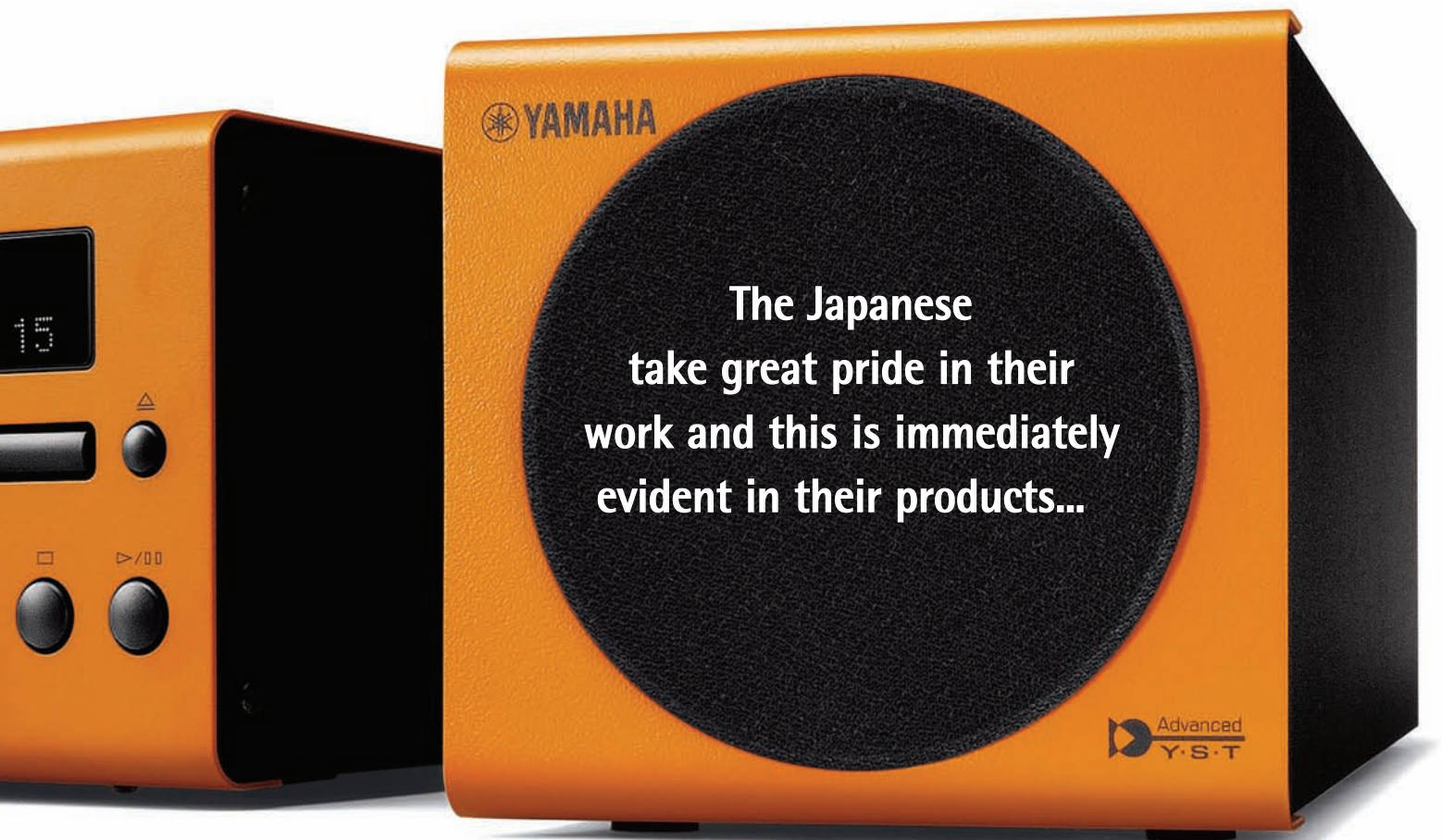


In fact Yamaha is uniquely positioned in the AV and stereo equipment field precisely because of the relationship between their engineers working within the same universal field of music. In other words, the synergy between the source components of music, the

instruments themselves, and the electronic devices that we use to replicate these components in our living rooms, is one that no other component manufacturer can lay claim to.

It is an immensely powerful relationship and make no mistake about it: Yamaha exploit it to the fullest extent. From the latest Blu-ray players to the flagship AV Receivers, the

# in Living Colour Music



## INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGIES

technological pace of development of home theatre and other electronic musical components is staggering.

Call it a case in point. You could never say that this is a company that is standing still. The AV division is constantly innovating, and in the current spotlight is the focus to maximise the portable music revolution that is iPod. Yamaha have developed a range of iPod devices in a range that they call 'Desk Top Audio' devices. The focus is on products that

deliver actual music as opposed to an iPod dock that delivers tinny, sub-standard quality sound that makes you want to put on the headphones rather than use the thing again.

To take things a step further, Yamaha take their music so seriously that when working with a wireless solution to iPod docking devices, they looked at BlueTooth as a means to match their musical requirements for their iPod products, decided it wasn't good enough, and so developed their own wireless

technology from scratch called, 'AirWire'.

AirWire has a latency of less than one tenth of BlueTooth, which, when you are broadcasting music signals all over the room is actually really important if you want everything to align time-wise as it should.

And you can use up to seven devices simultaneously – which means that your iPod connected to a small portable AirWire transmitter can play back through six other systems if you need it to. ►

## Cover Feature



MCR 040



TSX 70

To cap it all, AirWire is also a completely lossless format. Bluetooth makes use of compression technology – AirWire doesn't. It broadcasts full stereo as it is produced at source, in this case your iPod.

AirWire now allows you to use your iPod as per normal with the only difference being that you can now play your iPod through any of a number of new cool toys. Even better, the new toys can use AirWire to broadcast wirelessly to a subwoofer (any subwoofer). Still even better, it means you can have a wireless subwoofer in your home theatre

using AirWire. It's amazing and I've already ordered one because positioning new review subwoofers in my room is a nightmare that is now going the way of the dodo. Finally!

Yamaha have developed several iPod base stations that use either iPod docks or AirWire mobile iPod technology. We kick off with an iPod clock radio sporting with a cool soft wake alarm system. What happens is that three minutes ahead of your scheduled wake up time the unit wakes itself up and starts to play your iPod or radio at zero volume. Over the next three minutes it continuously

increases the volume slowly until it reaches normal listening levels.

This process is said to wake you with far less stress than a conventional alarm clock. And in case that's not enough, there is a normal alarm that will beep at your scheduled waking time (you can of course turn this option off and only have slow wake operational). I am buying my wife one of these because it will save our marriage (she uses an alarm clock – I don't need to). It's starting to become an expensive trip all of a sudden... Sigh...

There are two models in the range: the TSX 70, which is the docking station unit into which you simply click your iPod, and the TSX 80W which is the AirWire unit. With this unit you can have the iPod with you anywhere in the room and play music through the TSX 80W.

Expanding further, Yamaha have a mini hi-fi system also based on two similar models to the clock radios. The MCR 040 is a docking station, which your iPod, any iPod, simply clicks into and voila! You have music through the system and a charging iPod at the same time.

There are ten colours you can choose from, giving literal meaning to the "music in living colour" theme to Yamaha's marketing campaign. Also, the speakers can be positioned independently so you can achieve a surprisingly musical experience quickly and easily from your iPod.

The AirWire version of the same thing is the MCR 140, which of course gives you freedom of movement and control over the music being played directly from the iPod itself.

## Cover Feature

### YSP 4100



Together, these products add up to an amazing value add for your iPod. Suddenly your iPod becomes so much more than just a traveling device – it finds itself a home within your home, and in an instant you find yourself in Living Colour Music in so many more ways than you can imagine. Look forward to more detailed reviews on these components in the near future.

In terms of AV development, Yamaha have also not been standing still. They have taken their development of an integrated sound bar to the next level, and the all new YSP 5100 and YSP 4100, together with their unique microphone-based setup (which listens to your room and sets the unit up for the room automatically) deliver surround sound from a single unit designed to be positioned right under your flat screen TV. A more

budget friendly version, the NS BR300 surround sound speaker bar actually becomes almost invisible below your flat screen with an adjustable height to suit just about any model.

The sound mix technology that allows all of these units to focus and bounce beams of sound around the room to simulate speaker positions is really quite remarkable, and of course the sound system boost to any flat screen TV speaker system (which generally are mediocrity personified) make these units hands down winners.

Going even further, if that seems possible, adding to the ever growing and diverse mix we find almost hidden away, the likes of exciting products like the SR 300, which is an integrated A/V receiver with a built-in subwoofer. Finally!

Clearly then, it is Yamaha that continues to deliver the goods in the terms of the most enticing and innovative new products that have been cleverly thought out, beautifully designed and engineered by the best sound people in the world. It serves to position Yamaha as a market leader in the field of natural sound A/V and music.

Arguably, the fact that all this is being done by the company that in one way or another has brought more music to more people on the planet than any other, only further asserts Yamaha's deserved stellar reputation in the field of music reproduction.

**William Kelly**

### TSX 80W



 **YAMAHA**  
Powered by music

