



AMPLIFIER & CD PLAYER COMBOS
YAMAHA A-S700 AMPLIFIER & CD-S700 CD PLAYER

A fresh life for CD

When I was asked to do these stereo relics as a blast from the past, I had to pause and reconsider my options as a reviewer at Audio Video. After all, who listens to music on integrated stereo amplifiers fed by stereo CD players any more? There's me. Then there's the bloke down the road. And of course there is Johan Potgieter.

And we're the sum total of those who are left to appreciate all that stereo CD has to offer. So I offer my humble opinions to the guy down the road. And to Johan. This review is for you.

I am pleased to report that Yamaha have pursued the obvious route for stereo, namely that of the digital domain – CD specifically and MP3 (or whatever you have in your memory stick via a handily located USB port in the front of the unit). It has a slim line tray drawer for CD which opens smoothly to reveal a slim line, sculpted, high tech cradle into which you can plop your CD of digital delights. And it's fast! Load the disc and you're good to go, super quick.

Stats on the CD player are somewhat arbitrary as you can see above. Who can really tell anything about how this CD player sounds from these? However, with a good SNR and with this carried over to the amplifier, the subtle hint of things to come should not be ignored.

In CD direct mode – coupled to the amp in the same mode, you are ensured of the cleanest of signal paths between the components. And the result is simply astonishing.

Firstly you have two black boxes, which are subtly innocuous in their 'almost caught in a time warp' design that is pure vintage, classic Yamaha. Switchgear and push buttons are state-of-the-art with the bare minimums being the norm. Ergonomics are top drawer in all respects. Sleek, good looking remotes complete the picture.

So the pair does set you up for a bit of a shock. It's a bit like walking up to a Mini and finding that on opening the door you've stepped into a Rolls Royce. And as I say, as far as the stats go you can quite safely ignore them completely.

The S700s are way better than I could have

possibly anticipated. Even though the price point was an indication of the quality of the units, I was nonetheless blown away by the musicality of the pair. The clarity of the soundstage written by the Yammies is simply out of this world. It is complemented by an incredibly detailed, open precision in matching music, pace and perfect timing to leave you with an impression of realism that is as good as the better high end stuff was capable of delivering only a few short years ago.

Yamaha claim their ToP ART (Total Purity Audio Reproduction Technology) is their answer to the challenges of presenting a neutral yet balanced approach to music, without sacrificing the musicality in the process. The result is music that isn't dry, but which is alive and vibrant without being artificial. Music is left hanging in the air as if it were just presented by the instruments themselves.

In fact these components are more than likely to be hampered by the speakers put together with them. You need, and I do mean, NEED, to pair these units with as good a pair of speakers as you can possibly afford. They will easily, and I do MEAN, easily, out-perform



Stereo

VITAL STATS

A-S700 AMPLIFIER

Power output (quantified)

.....90 watts per channel into 8 ohm
@ 0.01% THD

Frequency response

.....20 Hz to 20 kHz normal,
10 Hz to 100 kHz in CD Direct

Signal-to-noise ratio

.....(CD Direct) 110 dB+

InputsGold plated RCA, CD,
Phono, Tuner, Line 2 & 3

Outputs

.....5-Way binding posts, AB switchable

CD-S700 CD PLAYER

Digital conversionDifferential D/A

Frequency response2 Hz to 20 kHz

Signal-to-noise ratio110 dB+

OutputsGold plated RCA,
digital coaxial, optical

PRICE

CD-S700.....R7 990

A-S700R9 440

VERDICT

What a duo. I'm astounded by the delivery. I think I ran out of CDs listening to them in action.

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and deliver to speakers at three times their cost without even raising an eyelid. In fact, with a bit more power behind it, the amplifier I believe could take down some serious rivals, as it punches far above its fighting weight.

The two inject an extra fifteen years of listening pleasure into the CD format – and of course they are ready for the next generation

of digital music via the USB port included. It has been a while since I had this much fun plundering my CD collection. It's surprising just how good the format has become – and that still we have players and amplifiers that can deliver on the best that CD has to offer. I had an absolute blast of a time!

William Kelly

