

# Affordable System Rating Criteria

**System**

## System Synergy

Do the various components work well together? This rating category goes beyond the level of basic operability and considers factors such as: Is the system balanced? -or- Do one or more of the components fall short of the rest of the package? In other words, most consumers would not pair a high-end set of speakers with a budget receiver. A system that is not balanced would be rated down in this category, despite the various components' individual performance capabilities. Also, do the components form a cohesive ensemble which together provide a credible reproduction experience? So, we are interested in the products performing well as an ensemble and that the system represents a good, optimal and balanced configuration.

## Overall Rating

This category involves rating the system in terms of its overall performance, value and build quality. As these reviews will evaluate affordable systems, the value element of this rating category is the highest priority. The reviewer will be asked to determine if the components perform at a level befitting their respective price points.

## Affordable System Rating Criteria

### Features

Does this product have an up-to-date and meaningful feature set? This may include features such as USB ports, memory card readers, Bluetooth capability, built-in room correction software, multi-zone capability, Profile 2.0 (Blu-ray), HDMI v 1.3, iPod connectivity, HD Radio, satellite radio, NetFlix (or other) video streaming capability, expansion ports, Ethernet networking capabilities, decoding of lossless audio codecs, passing of DSD or PCM signals over HDMI, multi-channel inputs/outputs, balanced line level inputs/outputs, RF remote control, multiple 12V triggers, THX Certification, xvYcc and wide color gamut capabilities, multiple HDMI outputs, direct input selection, phono input, upgradeable architecture, configurable amp outs, video crossconversion/transcoding, etc.

### Video

For source components, this category involves the product's ability to produce a quality picture in terms of resolution, image processing, color fidelity, etc. For receivers, this category involves the component's adeptness at processing video signals to include deinterlacing, scaling, transcoding, etc. At a minimum, a receiver must be able to pass an HDMI signal without noticeable degradation of the video.

### Audio

This category rates parameters such as tonal quality and accuracy, high and low frequency extension, naturalness of timbre, macro and micro dynamics, surround envelopment, directional cues, soundstage width and height, etc. How well does the system fade into the background so the listener feels they are experiencing a live performance? Does the system allow the user to connect emotionally to the performance?

### Build Quality

Is the product built to a high standard of quality in relation to its price? This includes the product's construction quality, the quality of its finish, its visual and tactile aesthetics and its overall physical execution.

### Ergonomics

Is the product easy to use and set up? Will less tech savvy users be able to realistically operate the equipment once it has been set up and calibrated?

### Value

This category reflects the cost/benefit ratio of product ownership with respect to comparable products in the marketplace.

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### Features

Does this product have an up-to-date and meaningful feature set? Can the speakers be positioned in a variety of locations within a room or cabinet without a major drop off in performance? Is the speaker bipolar/dipolar/planar/ribbon, etc.? Do the speakers require additional stands? Is the speaker bi-wire and bi-amp ready? For surround speakers, can they be run in either bipole or dipole mode? For subs, does the sub include a built-in equalizer? Is it remote controllable? Does it have selectable EQ contours? Does it have a phase control? Does it have variable low pass control?

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