

50in REAR-PROJECTION TV • 32in LCD TV • MULTICH



Features take a back seat with Primare's amp

Primare AV amp is simply sensational

MULTICHANNEL AMPLIFIER
PRIMARE SPA21



£ 2000

FOR

Sounds great with both movies and music; finesse and timing; excellent build; ease of use

AGAINST

Low feature count

VERDICT

Want an elegant, great-sounding multichannel amp? This is it

ALSO CONSIDER ?

DENON AVC-A11XV
★★★★★

£2500

September 2005

Packed with features and delivers a sound of impressive scale

ROTEL RSX-1067
★★★★★

£1795

August 2004

Solid build and a great sound from a sensible package

THIS PRIMARE IS the perfect contrast to the Denon multichannel amp on p28. Both products cost similar money and do the same job – accepting either a movie or music signal and amplifying it – but that’s where the similarities end.

The impressive Denon follows the traditional multichannel philosophy of ‘more is good’: that means more inputs, more features, cutting-edge tech, and loads of power. The only thing the Primare has more of is blank space on its minimalist front panel.

True, the SPA21 does all the basics, but extended surround will

“If you want the last word in features and connectivity, buy a different amp – buy this for its top sound”

need an additional power amplifier and there’s no Dolby Pro-Logic IIX. Automated set-up, HDMI and FireWire? Nope, not a sausage!

So if you crave the last word in features and connectivity, buy something else. However, if you want an elegant, simple-to-use multichannel amp that sounds great with music and movies, give the SPA21 serious consideration.

The Primare’s combination of finesse and firepower never fails to impress. That’s right – we said ‘finesse’. It’s not a word readily associated with products of this type, but fully deserved by this amp. The Primare delivers nuances in voices where most simply ignore them. The result is that dialogue

exerts greater emotional pull through this amp than just about anything else at this price.

This high level of resolution means that the amp communicates atmosphere well – whether it’s the jungle fights from Pixar’s animated masterpiece, *The Incredibles*, or the dark moments of *Downfall*.

Don’t get the wrong impression: this Primare will do full throttle explosions without a struggle. The bass is as taut as you like and there’s no shortage of dynamics. But that’s exactly what every other amp at this price excels at. The Primare is special for its lightness of touch and the fact that it’ll play music with the agility and rhythm that’s usually reserved for stereo kit.

Flaws? Effects-panning isn’t as fluid as the best, and authority falls short, too. That said, the Primare’s mix of talents isn’t easily found, and that’s why we recommend it so highly. Just don’t play tech-spec Top Trumps with your mates.

TECH SPECS

CHANNELS/POWER 5 x 100 watts
PROCESSING/DECODING MODES Dolby Pro-Logic II, Dolby Digital, Dolby Digital EX, DTS 5.1, DTS Neo:6, DTS-ES Matrix 6.1, DTS-ES Discrete 6.1
ANALOGUE INPUTS 5, plus eight-channel
PREOUTS eight-channel
DIGITAL AUDIO INPUTS 2 x coaxial, 2 x optical
DIGITAL AUDIO OUTPUTS Coaxial
VIDEO INPUTS 2 x component, 2 x S-Video, 4 x composite
VIDEO OUTPUTS 1 x component, 2 x S-video, 2 x composite,