

The First Imax Enhanced Onkyo AVRs

Written by Marco Attard
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Onkyo announces the 9.2-channel TX-NR797 and the 7.2-channel TX-NR696-- a pair of THX Certified Select AV receivers featuring support for immersive sound formats, 3D sound virtualisation, simplified audio distribution and 4K HDR.



The TX-NR797 is the first Onkyo product released under the IMAX Enhanced program, meaning it features DTS:X immersive audio decoding optimised to properly reproduce the full dynamic range of IMAX theatrical sound mixes available in digitally remastered IMAX Enhanced content. The IMAX Mode reproduces IMAX Enhanced content just as the filmmakers intended, and is scheduled for 4K HDR streaming and UHD Blu-ray release.

The TX-NR696 handles 210W (6 Ohms, 1kHz, 10% THD, 1-channel driven) while the TX-NR797 produces 220W (6 Ohms, 1kHz, 10% THD, 1-channel driven). Both feature anti-noise measures such as a refined HDMI board, isolated network board and strengthened power supply line, and are powered by a quad-core SoC enabling 802.11ac 2x2 MIMO wifi and improved network functionality.

The TX-NR696 plays Dolby Atmos and DTS:X formats through 5.2.2 channels, while the TX-NR797 adds another pair of heights (5.2.4) or rear surrounds (7.2.2). Dolby Surround and DTS Neural:X upmixers take care of legacy audio formats, and Dolby Atmos Height Virtualiser creates a virtual surround and height effect without need for additional surround or height speakers. The TXNR696 also includes DTS Virtual:X, a DSP-based technology creating a 3D soundfield from horizontal speaker layouts with DTS:X, DTS formats and non-encoded stereo formats.

A DSP-controlled Vocal Enhancer function accessible via remote keys or front panel controls provides 5-step adjustment of vocal frequencies to alleviate the problem of inaudible dialog in-program. A one-touch volume memory preset saves desired startup volume, and the

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receivers with power up and prepare for playback when an input key is pushed. Advanced Music Optimiser improves on the compressed audio playback of music streamed via Bluetooth.

The TX-NR797 also includes AccuEQ Advance 9-point room acoustic calibration. It measures sound at 9 positions to accurately calibrate and EQ speakers and subwoofers and remove standing waves. The system detects and compensates for background noise to ensure accurate equalisation. On the other hand the TX-NR696 includes AccuEQ with subwoofer EQ, and both AVRs carry AccuReflex phase-adjustment technology to optimise 3D sound field clarity in listening environments featuring Dolby Atmos-enabled speakers.

On the video side the AVRs have an HDMI Sub/Zone 2 output able to send signals from HDMI inputs 1-3 to a sub-display or projectors. This output joins a main output with ARC and x7 HDMI inputs (x1 front). All terminals are HDCP 2.2-compliant and support 4K/60 and BT.2020, and can handle HDR in the HDR10, HLG and Dolby Vision formats. The receivers also include 4K upscaling technology for HD sources, together with a refreshed GUI with OSD via HDMI.

Both AVRs include a variety of online services, such as Amazon Music, Spotify, Pandora, Tidal, Deezer and TuneIn, all controllable around the house using either Works with Sonos, built-in Chromecast, AirPlay 2, DTS Play-Fi or FlareConnect. Works with Sonos certification ties the AVRs into a Sonos system by pairing with a Sonos Connect. Chromecast built-in enables streaming from smartphones, tablets or PCs to speakers throughout the house. Voice control is available in conjunction with a Google Assistant-enabled device, such as the Onkyo Smart Speaker G3 or Google Home.

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