



Marantz HD-AMP1

Times were when Japanese electronics companies were famous for making things smaller — yet ‘proper’ hi-fi long ago settled on a standard 17-inch component width, with amps single height and AV receivers frighteningly enormous. Well Marantz has challenged that in several areas — with its slimline AV receivers, and now with a lovely pair of rather retro-looking Marantz units, the HD-DAC1, and this HD-AMP1.

We reckon the amplifier to be a classic in waiting — this ‘MusicLink’ series comes under the design auspices of Ken Ishiwata, so we were not surprised to enjoy impeccable audio tuning in addition to the combination of beautiful looks, with its wooden end-cheeks and classic knob layout, and facilities that have been carefully chosen to answer the needs of many a modern living

space. There are two analogue inputs, and five digital ones — two optical, one coaxial, one USB-B for direct connection to computer, one USB-A slot on the front which can play from smart devices while charging them. There’s no networking here, but that computer USB input can play PCM up to 32-bit/384kHz, and DSD at 2.8, 5.6 or 11.2MHz (the DAC chip here is the Sabre ES9010K2M).

Then there is the power section — Marantz HDAM-SA2 modules providing 35W of power into eight ohms, doubling to 70W into four ohms, specified up to 50kHz to deliver the higher frequencies of high-resolution audio files. While we’d

expect the HD-AMP1 to be paired with perhaps a nice set of standmounts (this would make a great music and TV sound system), the Marantz proved capable of far more, driving even ‘difficult’ floorstanders to enjoyably high levels of truly hi-fi sound, without seeming to break a sweat.

This quality is reflected in its price, no cheapie at \$2260, though clearly you could pay more to get more, from Marantz or others. But we were so delighted by what this compact and home-friendly design delivered that our judges were united in recognising it. More info: www.qualifi.com.au



Qualifi's Paul Astbury collects for Marantz.



Retro style, modern sockets — digital inputs include USB-B for playback direct from computer.