

DUELLING DOMAINS

Can Adcom's GFR-700HD receiver handle video as well as it does audio?

For an audio receiver to be worth its salt today, it must be able to handle the intricacies of video with the same precision as it does audio. So rather than waxing poetic on how nicely the GFR-700HD's controls blend into its industrial-tech black and silver finish, I'll start instead with the integral video scaler. It accepts video signals from legacy sources such as VCRs and DVD players, converts them into whatever resolution your video display prefers, then outputs the video to your display through an HDMI digital video jack. The downside to this scaler is that it only works on 480i standard-definition signals; video at resolutions of 480p or greater is ignored and output as-is. (A planned video board upgrade won't have this limitation.) But 480i signals are the ones that need the most work.

There are many options for controlling the picture, such as deciding upon the aspect ratio and fine-tuning vertical/horizontal positioning of the image. Scaler settings for each input are

stored, so they will change automatically when you switch from your VCR to your DVD player. And while upscaling a VCR to the 1080p resolution of my Samsung LED rear-projection display might seem crazy, the image from the videocassette of *My Fair Lady*, upscaled through the GFR-700HD's National Semiconductor video processing chip, looks smooth.

I then switch to my Oppo DV-981HD DVD player (set to 480i and using component output), and try *Enter the Dragon* and the more recent *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest*. *Dragon* looks steady and smooth despite its gritty film grain; Bruce Lee's ruddy skin tones appear realistic to the eye. *Pirates'* many panoramic vistas actually seem more detailed than they would on a standard-definition display. (Of course, neither looks as good here as the Blu-ray versions of these movies do.) Using the *HQV Benchmark DVD*—a much more demanding trial than normal program material would be—I find Adcom's upconversion



BY MARSHAL ROSENTHAL • PHOTOGRAPHY BY CORDERO STUDIOS



The GFR-700HD has a decent number of inputs, outputs, and control jacks for a receiver in its price range, but it has only five amplifier channels where most others might have seven.

scoring high marks indeed. Just for fun, I also connect a Nintendo Wii video game console and set it for 480i output—and to my surprise, the graphics actually look better than when I use the Wii's 480p output directly.

A nice touch is that the remote has a dedicated lip sync delay button. Often in high-definition cable and satellite TV programs (and even on some DVDs), video and audio can fall out of sync. Most receivers and surround processors make you go through a menu to adjust lip sync, but it's easier doing it on the fly as the GFR-700HD allows.

As important as video capabilities have become in receivers, audio performance remains paramount. I believe that a receiver's "build" plays a huge part in its sound quality. (The "Massive Linear Toroidal Transformer-based Power Supply" that Adcom touts doesn't seem like hyperbole when you consider the receiver weighs 50 pounds.)

From the moment I turn it on, the GFR-700HD projects an aura of solidity and confidence. It's equipped with the usual 5.1- and 7.1-channel variants of Dolby and DTS processing. Receivers with the latest processing from Dolby and DTS (True HD and Master HD, respectively) are still unavailable as of this writing; for these formats, the GFR-700HD provides a 7.1-channel analog input, and leaves the processing to your HD DVD or Blu-ray player. If you want to set up a 7.1-channel system, you will have



The GFR-700HD comes with a generic universal remote control, but it also offers an RS-232 jack that allows easy integration with Crestron and AMX touchscreen control systems.

to add an extra amp—the GFR-700HD is unusual in offering only five channels of amplification. A second audio zone can be set up, so you can extend the GFR-700HD's sound to another room using an extra amp and speakers.

Audio menus are logically organized, and there's just about everything you could ask for as regards tweaking the sound (or video) and managing bass. But Adcom bucks the trend of automatically balancing the channel levels, so unless you will be having the GFR-700HD professionally installed, be prepared to pull out your sound-pressure level meter and fire up the GFR-700HD's internal test tone generator. After I dust off my old RadioShack SPL meter, it takes me less than half an hour to perform the required calibration and setup.

I began playing a multi-channel SACD of Vaughan Williams' *Symphony No. 5 in D Major* as strict stereo. Reproduction is exuberant, melodic, and even-tempered, with delicate passages coming through distinctly and with good clarity. Switching to surround sound and big

movie effects, the amplifier kicks me out of complacency immediately. It handles explosions and quick bursts of sound as cleanly as it does dialogue, and envelops me in infectious melodies when the cast of *Dreamgirls* breaks out in song. Even when I crank the GFR-700HD's volume way up, the amp retains absolute control over the dual 7-inch woofers in my tower speakers.

The GFR-700HD is an ideal receiver for those who want audiophile cachet and sound quality, but also desire a helping of the convenience and video processing features that few high-end audio products offer. **HE**

DESCRIPTION

Audio/video receiver with AM/FM tuner, 7.1-channel processing, and five channels of amplification; incorporates video scaler for 480i sources

COMPONENTS

145 watts per channel into 8 ohms

FORMATS SUPPORTED

Dolby Digital and Pro Logic Ix, DTS ES-Discrete and Neo:6

CONNECTIONS

Input: two HDMI, four component video, four S-video, four component video, three coaxial and three Toslink optical digital audio, six analog stereo audio, 7.1-channel analog audio, spring clips for AM antenna, coaxial connector for FM antenna

Output: HDMI, component video, two S-video, two composite video, five pairs of five-way binding posts for speaker connection, three analog stereo audio for recording, two analog stereo audio (fixed and variable) for zone 2, analog stereo audio auxiliary, 7.1-channel analog audio

Control: separate sets of 3.5mm jacks for IR input and 12-volt trigger for main zone and zone 2; DB-9 connector for RS-232

DIMENSIONS

7 x 17 x 15.5 inches (hwd)

PRICE/CONTACT

PRICE: \$2,899

CONTACT: 480.607.2277, adcom.com

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