

TRENDS

Electronics & Design

HiFi Magazine

HI-FI • HOME THEATRE • SMART HOME • WHAT'S NEW? • AND MORE...
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**EXCELLENT PICTURE AND
CLEAR AND DETAILED SOUND**
– Magnetar UDP900



**A POWER-HOUSE ALL-IN-ONE
STREAMING AMPLIFIER**
– Naim Uniti Nova PE (Power Edition)



**THE BEST SURROUND
SOUND PROCESSOR**
– McIntosh MHT300



Rhythm & Music: CLASSICAL, BLUES, JAZZ, PROGRESSIVE ROCK

A black McIntosh MHT300 Home Theatre Receiver is shown in a living room setting. The receiver is placed on a wooden surface, with a large black speaker to its left and a television to its right. The receiver's front panel features a digital display showing 'McIntosh MHT300 HOME THEATER RECEIVER' and '55% DOLBY ATMOS'. A silver volume knob is prominent on the right side of the front panel, with 'VOLUME' printed above it. Below the knob, there is a 'PUSH POWER / MUTE' button and the 'dtsx M Doby Atmos' logo. The background shows a window with light coming through and a portion of a television screen displaying a landscape.

The Best Surround Sound Processor, the McIntosh MHT300

By DAVID SUSILO

New York-based historic and prestigious audio brand **McIntosh** several months ago launched the *MHT300*, an \$8,000, 7.2-channel home theatre receiver that boasts a monstrous 120 W to 150 W per channel of power. That's right: up to 1,050 total wattage. What's impressive about this is that all that legendary **McIntosh** power (*Hypex*-based class-*D* for this product) is distributed to all seven channels, making for some serious movie-watching sound from all over. **McIntosh** stands as an industry leader in audio due to its decades-long legacy of producing high-end audio equipment renowned for superior sound quality, precision engineering, and pretty glass fascia with blue-green backlights. With the brand's commitment to innovation, incorporating advanced technologies and iconic design, **McIntosh** continues to be the preferred choice for audiophiles seeking top-tier audio and exclusivity.

As the beating heart of your home entertainment setup, this AV receiver promises to redefine your cinematic experiences with audio enrichment that delivers. In this comprehensive review, I will test the *MHT* on its performance, aiding you in making an informed decision for your home theatre needs.



With class-D's efficiency, the *MHT300* is much cooler running and won't hit your power socket nearly as hard, which is a huge plus. And these days, some of my favourite amps rely on *Hypex* modules, so needless to say there's not a downside in terms of power and performance. Granted, relying on modules of this sort does add to the expense of the receiver, but I'm guessing not by a whole lot at this price point and definitely not as expensive as a class-A/B build.

Features and Functions

I found **McIntosh's** remote control to be an absolute delight, which I was more than happy to use for a couple of months. It's elegant, ergonomic, and comfortable in the hand. Light but properly balanced. The layout is logical and doesn't take a few days to get used to. The only negative is

that it's not backlit. Something that I expect from a receiver at this price. Heck, it is something I expect from a receiver above \$1,000 in price. However, if you are like me, I usually set my home theatre gears before the start of a show or movie, and never touch any of the remotes I use until the movie is completely done. So, albeit my nitpick, to me personally it's not a big deal. In fact, it's not even an issue at all. Perhaps surprisingly, the *MHT300* doesn't feature any analog inputs and *Bluetooth* or even wireless Internet for that matter. I was hoping for at least one analog input for turntable and *Bluetooth* or *Airplay 2* connection. Its four *HDMI ins* and one *HDMI eARC in/out* all support resolutions and refresh rates up to 8K/60 Hz or 4K/120 Hz, all the meaningful *HDR* formats, *4:4:4 Color*, and the *BT.2020* colour space, but not all of the features of the updated *HDMI 2.1* spec. It doesn't feature *Dynamic Lip-Sync*, for example, no *QMS* or *QFT*, no *ALLM* or *VRR*.

So, if you are a resolute gamer, look elsewhere; besides, earnest gamers are not the target audience of **McIntosh** anyway. Most people will likely be well-served by its *HDMI* connectivity. There are also a pair of coaxial digital and a pair of optical digital audio inputs, the aforementioned *FM* antenna connection, and a handful of control inputs. Surprisingly, many people still listens to *FM* instead of streaming audio.

Home automation is not in

Speaking about control, using **Control4**, the number one brand in home automation market share in the world, there is no driver for the *MHT300*. This, I find to be inexcusable as creating a driver for a receiver with basic functionalities takes no more than a week. I should know. I used to create **Control4** drivers when I was at **Pioneer**. I did them when I had spare time and they took about one week per device.

MCINTOSH MHT300 7.2-CHANNEL HOME THEATRE RECEIVER



« In fact, I hate this album's two-channel version so much I can't understand why people love this album at all.

However starting from the very first second playing back this album in *Atmos*, I immediately love it!

I found the mix reveals a completely new aural experience that is quite revealing. Certainly, not only is this a massively gigantic leap from the stereo mix, but a dramatic immersive experience that is all encompassing. It feels like I'm listening to a completely new album. »



MCINTOSH MHT300 7.2-CHANNEL HOME THEATRE RECEIVER



Editor's note: McIntosh recently communicated with the editorial staff of **TED Magazine** indicating that the *MHT300* has now acquired Control4 certification since mid-April 2024.

On the Audio Aspect

In addition to the seven loudspeaker-level outputs and two independent subwoofer outs (which can be configured as 5.2,

5.2.2, or 7.2), there are also pre-outs for four height channels. So, if you're willing to bring four channels of external amplification to the party, the receiver can handle up to a 7.2.4-channel setup. For this review I use the internal amplifiers for my bed tracks, two subwoofer outs for my **MK Sound V12+** and my **SVS SB1000 Pro**, and channel the four height channels to my **ToneWinner AD5100** multi-channel amplifiers connected





8K VIDEO SWITCHING
ON ALL HDMI PORTS

by my **Vermouth Audio** *Black Pearl* RCA cables.

The Dirac Live Calibration

The *MHT300* comes with a real, full-sized microphone stand and a pretty hockey-puck mic for *Dirac Live* setup. Just like any *Dirac Live* calibration, I did fuss with the calibration process a bit, and I wish these time-wasting process would be fixed by *Dirac*. There is no excuse in needing to trial and error to get the calibration process up and running. This is not a **McIntosh** problem as I encountered the same problem using *Dirac* regardless of the brands using it. On average, I have to trial and error around a dozen of trials to make things to run smoothly. At the end of the day, *Dirac* waste upwards of an hour for something that should have and could have been done automatically. I wish manufacturers who use *Dirac* go together up and in arms and demand for *Dirac* to fix this decade-old problem.

« ...the opening Rome set-piece is a *tour de force* of controlled-cacophony sonic design. As a giant metal ball bomb bounces around the city, **Dom** and his family crew race around the streets in a desperate attempt to stop it. The whole sequence plays out like it was designed by a sound engineer on a diet of meth and cocaine, and the soundtrack complements the mayhem with joyous, albeit reckless abandon. Through the *MHT300*, all the channels were filled with revving engines and squealing tires, while each bounce of the bomb-ball was enhanced by a hefty but clean bass bump. »

During Our Film Listening Sessions

A friend of mine lend me his *Fast X* (UHD BD). While you wouldn't expect a subtle soundtrack from any film in this franchise, the opening Rome set-piece is a *tour de force* of controlled-cacophony sonic design. As a giant metal ball bomb bounces around the city, **Dom** and his family crew

race around the streets in a desperate attempt to stop it. The whole sequence plays out like it was designed by a sound engineer on a diet of meth and cocaine, and the soundtrack complements the mayhem with joyous, albeit reckless abandon. Through the *MHT300*, all the channels were filled with revving engines and squealing tires, while each bounce of the

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bomb-ball was enhanced by a hefty but clean bass bump.

Dirac certainly plays its part in creating a sonic landscape that's composed and balanced despite all the carnage, with a smooth low-end that's nicely integrated. But even without using *Dirac* and only using manual calibration (patting myself in the back, here), when the bomb explodes, there's a wave of low-frequency energy that spreads out through the room, and the ability to set crossovers for each speaker allows them to seamlessly hand off to the subs in the system of all **MK Sound** speakers in my home theatre, be it in 5.1.2 using all *MHT300*'s internal amp or using 5.1.4 using my **Marantz MA500 THX** Certified monoblocks and **Tone Winner AD5100** power amp to run the *Atmos* speakers. To me, this proves that the *MHT300* is not only very capable as a receiver, but also as a *pre-pro*. The lack of *XLR* never swayed me at all. With *RCA* lengths at less than 10 ft each, there is no audible difference between using balanced *XLR* and unbalanced *RCA* anyway. There is one unique sound profile (**McIntosh** calls it *Voicing EQ*) called *Action+Movie* that I absolutely love. This

sound profile resembles the sound profile of many large sized **Dolby Cinemas** and *THX* Certified cinemas I have measured around the world done during my audio and video calibration work in Indonesia, US, Singapore, Dubai, Europe... a total of around 100 large cinemas... outside the 300 commercial cinemas I've designed in my life. Even better, **McIntosh** actually printed all their *Voicing EQs* so you know what you're going to get when using the sound profile.

The Audio Section

On the audio-only side, I listened to my go-to (more like one and only) *Atmos* audio album, **Pink Floyd's** *Dark Side of the Moon*. In fact, I hate this album's two-channel version so much I can't understand why people love this album at all. However starting from the very first second playing back this album in *Atmos*, I immediately love it! I found the mix reveals a completely new aural experience that is quite revealing. Certainly, not only is this a massively gigantic leap from the stereo mix, but a dramatic immersive experience that is all encompassing. It feels like I'm listening to

a completely new album. The iconic heart-beat on *Speak to Me*, envelopes me with sense of being inside the body. The classic *On the Run* is a perfect demonstration for why *Atmos* is so essential, and in this case, done well. Announcements emanate from the height channels, and the synthesizers moves across the ceiling as they spread out allowing for the footsteps to steer around the floor.

The **Dolby Atmos** mix provides the perception of even the infinitesimally slightest nuances and by virtue of the object-based technology creates a truly enveloping three-dimensional soundscape. Following the 5.1 surround mix, the introduction to *Money* (the only track I truly love from the entire **Pink Floyd's** repertoire throws the cash register, coins, and money counting machine from one channel to another in a rather gimmicky and *cliche* way... but it works well and in-context to the song and the mix. **David Gilmour's** guitar moves throughout the space, captivating not only my ears but my dog's too. She turned her head around, perhaps confusingly, trying to find the source of the cash register and coins.



Conclusion

After living with the **McIntosh MHT300** receiver for a month, I fell in love with it. I know my review may not exude my excitement for the **MHT300** but this unit is the best-sounding surround sound processor I've had the privilege to use and

calibrated with only the **McIntosh's** own **MX180** and **Trinnov** being the exception. Needless to say, this receives my highest recommendation and I'm seriously contemplating in putting my money where my mouth is.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Manufacturer: McIntosh Labs
 T: 1 607.723.3512,
<https://www.mcintoshlabs.com/>

Other audio-related equipments used for this review

- AppleTV** 4K Streaming device
- Audioquest** 303 Power Conditioner
- Kaleidescape** Movie Server
- MK Sound** S150 x5 THX Certified Speakers
- MK Sound** V12+ THX Certified Subwoofer
- Panasonic** UB9000 THX Certified 4K Bluray player
- THX** 8K HDMI-2.1 HDMI Cables
- Torus Power** AVR2-15plus Power Isolator and Voltage Regulator
- Vermouth Audio** Black Pearl RCA Interconnects
- Vermouth Audio** Black Pearl Speaker Cables

