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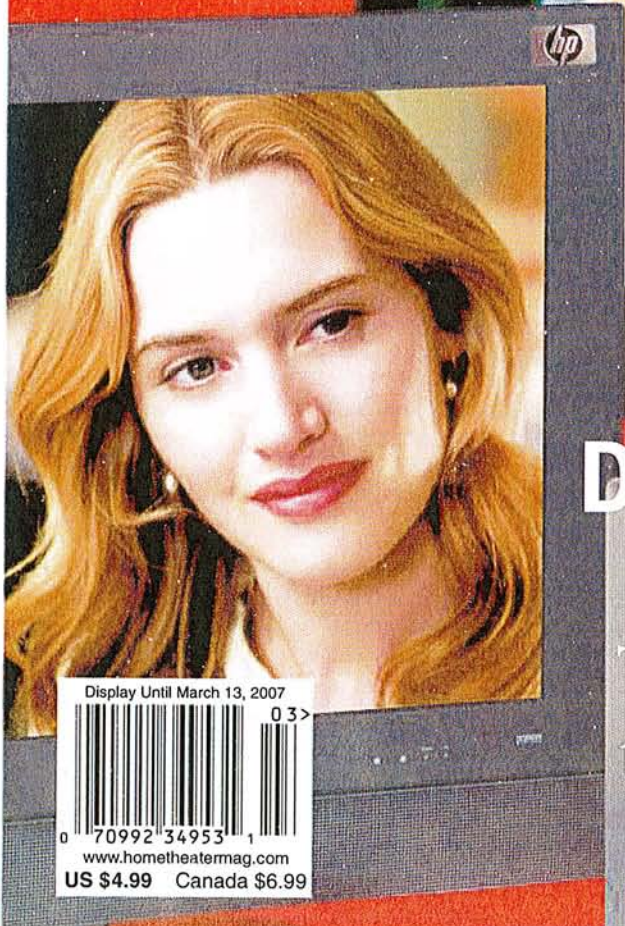


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# Snell D7 Speaker System, Marantz SR9600 A/V Receiver, and Marantz DV9600 Disc Player

Together again for the first time.



BY STEVE GUTTENBERG

**As I unboxed this month's** Spotlight System, I flashed on the innovative histories of Marantz and Snell Acoustics. Saul B. Marantz was a bona fide American audio pioneer in the 1950s and 1960s. His company's electronics not only sounded amazing, they were drop-dead gorgeous. Maybe that's why Marantz's early designs regularly sell on eBay for more than their original prices. Peter Snell was one

of the brightest speaker designers to emerge in the mid-1970s. Back in the day, I owned a pair of his first speakers, the Type A, and had many conversations with Peter about music. In those simpler times, Saul Marantz and Peter Snell could launch their companies armed with not much more than a driving passion to produce great audio gear—and the inspired engineering to make the dream real. Best of all, both companies still adhere to their founders' perfectionistic traditions.

## Back to the Future

The SR9600 A/V receiver's classy styling harkens back to the days when Mr. Marantz was building electronics in the basement of his New York City home. The receiver even sports the brand's signature Gyro-Touch Tuning. (That's the horizontal wheel under the display). Spinning the rubber-rimmed Gyro is more elegant than pushing up/down buttons to tune in the local college radio station. This reminds me that the receiver is available in two versions. The SR9600 comes with *two* AM/FM tuners, so you can listen to different stations in different rooms of your home. The SR9600XM has a single AM/FM tuner, and, if you add a Connect & Play XM antenna, it can play XM Satellite Radio, as well.

In addition to the SR9600, Marantz sent me the matching DV9600 disc player. Both components feature Marantz's HDAM-SA2 proprietary modular circuit topology, which is said to reduce distortion and produce pure sound. You can find the technology in Marantz's flagship Reference components like the PM-11S1 stereo integrated amplifier and the SA-11S1 stereo SACD/CD player.

I'm happy to report that the HDMI video connection between

## HIGHLIGHTS

### Snell D7 Speaker System:

- Built in the United States
- Snell offers a vast range of custom finish options

the SR9600, the DV9600, and my Philips 32PW8422 TV was glitch free. And, since the HDMI connection also delivers Dolby, DTS, CD, and DVD-Audio signals from the player to the receiver, I never even bothered to hook up a coaxial or optical digital cable—or the usual six analog cables between the player and the receiver. And, yes, the joy of single-cable audio/video hookup will likely apply to a Blu-ray or HD DVD player. I also hooked up the iLink (IEEE 1394 FireWire) connection. Marantz doesn't claim any performance advantage for iLink, but I think it's more transparent sounding than a 5.1-channel analog connection for SACD and DVD-Audio.

The SR9600's touchscreen remote is a two-way design, so, if you can't see the SR9600's display, you can check the input setting, volume, multiroom settings, and more on the touchscreen. If you really want to go all out with programming the remote, hook it up to your PC and check Marantz's Website for software updates. The DV9600's run-of-the-mill, hard-button remote works well enough and doesn't require any special skills. Call me old-fashioned, but it was definitely more my speed.

Inquiring buyers might wonder if the DV9600 disc player (\$2,099) is a substantial step up from the Marantz DV7600 (\$900). Here's

the deal: Compared with its lower-priced sibling, the DV9600 has upgraded video and audio circuits

and Version 1.1 HDMI. It also offers FireWire connectivity, and you get 480i, 480p, 720p, 1080i,

## AT A GLANCE SNELL D7 SPEAKER SYSTEM



These listings are based on the manufacturer's stated specs; the HT Labs box below indicates the gear's performance on our test bench.

### SUBWOOFER: BASIS 300

Connections:	Stereo speaker- and line-level inputs
Enclosure Type:	Vented
Woofer (size in inches, type):	10, treated paper cone
Power Rating (watts):	300
Crossover Bypass:	Yes
Available Finishes:	Cherry, Black, custom finishes available for extra cost
Dimensions (H x W x D, inches):	17 x 15.25 x 16.38
Weight (pounds):	60
Price:	\$1,500

### SPEAKER:

Type:

Tweeter (size in inches, type):

Midrange (size in inches):

Woofer (size in inches, type):

Nominal Impedance (ohms):

Recommended Amp

Power (watts):

Available Finishes:

Dimensions

(H x W x D, inches):

Weight (pounds):

Price:

### D7

Two-and-a-half-way, tower

1, silk dome

6.5, treated paper (2)

4

50–250

Cherry, Black, custom finishes for extra cost

40.25 x 8 x 12

50

\$3,000/pair

### LCR7

Two-way, LCR monitor

1, silk dome

5.25, treated paper (2)

4

20–250

Cherry, Black, custom finishes for extra cost

19 x 7 x 8.75

21

\$1,000/each

### SR7

Three-way, on-wall surround

1, aluminum dome

2.5

5.25, treated paper

4

20–150

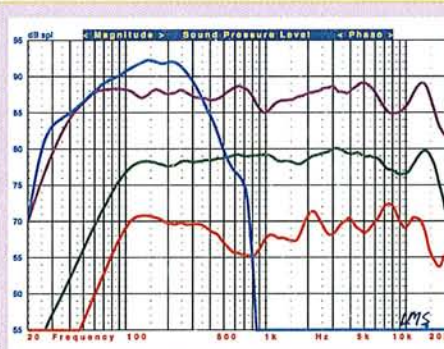
Painted Black or White

11.75 x 10.4 x 5.625

12

\$1,200/pair

## HT Labs Measures: Snell D7 Speaker System



••• L/R Sensitivity:  
87.5 dB from 500 Hz to 2 kHz

••• Center Sensitivity:  
90.5 dB from 500 Hz to 2 kHz

••• Surround Sensitivity:  
85 dB from 500 Hz to 2 kHz

This graph shows the quasi-anechoic (employing close-miking of all woofers) frequency response of the D7 L/R (purple trace), Basis 300 subwoofer (blue trace), LCR7 center channel (green trace), and SR7 surround (red trace). All passive loudspeakers were

measured with grilles at a distance of 1 meter with a 2.83-volt input and scaled for display purposes.

The D7's listening-window response (a five-point average of axial and +/-15-degree horizontal and vertical responses) measures +1.59/-2.58 decibels from 200 hertz to 10 kilohertz. The -3-dB point is at 41 Hz, and the -6-dB point is at 33 Hz. Impedance reaches a minimum of 3.69 ohms at 3.0 kHz and a phase angle of -42.43 degrees at 74 Hz.

The LCR7's listening-window response measures +1.59/-2.02 dB from 200 Hz to 10 kHz. An average of axial and +/-15-degree horizontal responses measures +1.31/-1.95 dB from 200 Hz to 10 kHz. The -3-dB point is at 90 Hz, and the -6-dB point is at 73 Hz. Impedance reaches a minimum of 4.22 ohms at 208 Hz and a phase angle of -35.11 degrees at 2.1 kHz.

The SR7's three-face averaged response in diffuse mode measures +2.47/-4.63 dB from 200 Hz to 10 kHz. The -3-dB point is at 86 Hz, and the -6-dB point is at 74 Hz. Impedance reaches a minimum of 3.71 ohms at 284 Hz and a phase angle of -59.11 degrees at 96 Hz.

The Basis 300's close-miked response, normalized to the level at 80 Hz, indicates that the lower -3-dB point is at 51 Hz and the -6-dB point is at 32 Hz. The upper -3-dB point is at 356 Hz using the sub input. —MJP

**NEED A DISPLAY?**

We recommend the following displays for use with the Snell/Marantz system: If you've gone this far, you might as well go all the way and incorporate a Marantz display device into your music/theater system, as well. Two perfect examples are:

**Marantz PD5050D Plasma Monitor, \$6,500**

**Resolution:** 1,365 by 768 (720p)  
**Best Video Connection:** HDMI or component, depending on the source  
**Weight:** 98 pounds



**Marantz VP-11S1 DLP Projector, \$19,999**

**Resolution:** 1,920 by 1,080 (1080p)  
**Best Video Connection:** HDMI or component, depending on the source  
**Weight:** 29 pounds



backside. You can switch the rear tweeter on or off, but I almost always left it on because I love the way it added a greater sense of depth to the soundstage. The D7 and LCR7 are biwirable and biampable, features that Peter Snell helped pioneer in the late 1970s. (I used Tributaries Silver cables for biwiring the two speakers.)

The standard available finishes—hand-sanded, hand-oiled real cherry or satin-black walnut veneers—are set off with 0.25-inch-thick machined silver or satin-black aluminum end caps. But, if you want a custom-finished speaker or subwoofer to match your décor, just say the word and send along paint samples. If you'd rather go with Ferrari red or any shade of automotive finish on your speakers, Snell will build a set just for you. Snell can custom paint or plate the speakers' metal caps, as well. They'll even cover the speakers' perforated metal grilles with any color fabric. They won't rule out anything, including building unique speakers based on existing Snell models. The charges for custom finishes vary; many are available for just 15 percent more than standard pricing. Snell is planning on installing a live Webcam shot of the Peabody, Massachusetts, production line on their Website so customers can watch their speakers being built. Is that cool, or what?

The hands-on approach isn't just for the cabinets; it also extends to the way the speakers are built. Snell's factory technicians hand-tune the crossover network to precisely match the drivers in each and every speaker they make. The tweaking process ensures that the Snell speakers' sound matches the corresponding original engineering prototype. In the unlikely event

and 1080p output over the HDMI connection.

**Swell Snells**

As you might remember, I reviewed the Snell LCR7, the first Series 7 monitor, in the July 2005 issue of *Home Theater*. The Series 7 line has since expanded with a bunch of new models. All of the free-standing models share the LCR7's gently curved cabinetry and snazzy 0.25-inch-thick aluminum top plates. (The in-wall and in-cabinet Series 7 models obviously do without the styling doodads.) The new D7 tower speaker is more than just a bigger LCR7 with larger woofers. It sports a rear-firing tweeter on its

The SR7 looks like a dipole surround speaker, but it's more versatile. A rear-mounted switch toggles to a direct-radiating mode where only the front-mounted 5.25-inch woofer and 1-inch tweeter are engaged; the Diffuse setting adds the side-mounted 2.5-inch mid-range drivers and turns off the front tweeter to open up the sound. It's a highly effective surround speaker in either mode.

The Basis 300 subwoofer sports a 10-inch driver and a 300-watt amp, and it matches the Series 7 styling. The subwoofer crossover control and all of the inputs are on the rear baffle, but the illuminated volume control is handily positioned on the top panel.



Steve found the D7 system to be easy to tune to his preferences. If you're less technically inclined, you can use Marantz's auto-calibration system to help simplify the process.

SNELL D7 SPEAKER SYSTEM					OVERALL RATING
Build Quality	Value	Features	Performance	Ergonomics	94
→ Hand-crafted cabinets, built in the United States of America → Level of custom finishing is unprecedented in this price range	→ If you need a replacement tweeter or woofer, Snell supplies the driver and its associated crossover parts	→ Hand-adjusted crossover networks optimize performance → You can use the LCR7 in a vertical or horizontal orientation	→ These speakers provide a steady diet of goose-bump-raising epiphanies → The D7's rear tweeter adds depth to the imaging and soundstage	→ The D7 tower's outrigger feet enhance its stability → Love the Basis 300's top-mounted volume control	
95	94	94	93	93	

**General information:**  
 D7 Loudspeaker, \$3,000/pair; LCR7 Monitor Speaker, \$1,000/each; SR7 Surround Speaker, \$1,200/pair; Basis 300 Subwoofer, \$1,500 → Snell Acoustics, (978) 538-6262, [www.snellacoustics.com](http://www.snellacoustics.com) → Dealer Locator Code SNE

Few brands offer Snell's vast custom finishing and fabricating options. The attention to detail is more than skin deep, and the hand-tweaked designs pay off big time when you close your eyes and just listen.

## HIGHLIGHTS

### Marantz SR9600 A/V Receiver and DV9600 Disc Player:

- Marantz's best-ever A/V receiver
- DVD/SACD/CD player with HDMI output up to 1080p

that a customer fries a tweeter or woofer, Snell doesn't just supply a replacement driver; they send a driver *and* a crossover matched to your original speaker's precise tolerances. The company stocks at least some parts for every speaker they've ever made. That level of long-term customer



support is exceedingly rare these days, but, again, it's something that Peter Snell insisted upon.

### Plugging In

When I initially set up the Snell/Marantz system, I used another brand's subwoofer and surround speakers from a previous review. I was feeling a little tired and didn't want to lug everything upstairs on the first day, so I hooked up just the D7 towers and LCR7 center speaker to the SR9600. Truth be told, the sound didn't blow me away. While the brand-X sub was no slouch (it's a highly regarded \$3,000 model) and the surround speakers were quite good, the sound

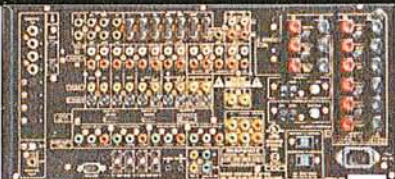
was disjointed. I took the hint and quickly unboxed and plugged in the Basis 300 subwoofer and the SR7 surround speakers. Ah, yes, that's more like it! The transformation wasn't subtle. The SR7s made for a more completely integrated sound-field, and the front three Snells' imaging snapped into tighter focus.

The Basis 300's bass kicked the system into high gear, and overall dynamics were much improved.

The D7 towers sounded best when run small, with the SR9600's bass management directing bass under 80 hertz to the Basis 300 sub. I had started out with the SR9600's bass-management crossover lower,

☐ You can log on to Marantz's Website to program the SR9600 remote and for software updates. Below, the HDMI connections make the receiver a breeze to hook up.

## AT A GLANCE MARANTZ SR9600 A/V RECEIVER



### FEATURES

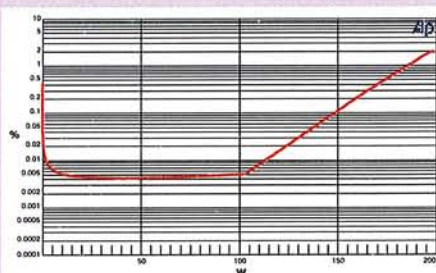
Processing Modes:	Dolby: Digital 5.1, EX, Pro Logic IIx, Headphone; DTS: DTS, ES, 96/24, Neo:6; Other: SCS Surround II, HDCD, THX
THX Certification:	Yes, Ultra 2
Audio D/A Converter:	24-bit/192-kilohertz
Number of Amp Channels:	7
Power Rating (per channel):	140 watts, into 8 ohms; 170 watts into 6 ohms
Frequency Response, Analog:	8 Hz to 100 kHz
Dimensions (H x W x D, inches):	8.25 x 17.3 x 19
Weight (pounds):	57.3
Price:	\$4,199

### CONNECTIONS

<b>Inputs:</b>	
Video:	HDMI (2), component video (4), S-video (7), composite video (7)
Audio:	Coaxial digital (4), optical digital (5), iLink IEEE 1394 (2), 7.1-channel analog (1), stereo analog (4)
<b>Outputs:</b>	
Video:	HDMI (1), component video (2), S-video (2), composite video (2)
Audio:	Coaxial digital (1), optical digital (1), stereo analog (2), 7.1 preamp (1), subwoofer output (1)
<b>Additional:</b>	RS-232 (1), 12-volt trigger outputs (4), emitter outputs (4), IR flasher outputs (2), RC in and out (4)

These listings are based on the manufacturer's stated specs; the HT Labs box below indicates the gear's performance on our test bench.

## HT Labs Measures: Marantz SR9600 A/V Receiver



- Five channels driven continuously into 8-ohm loads:  
0.1% distortion at 126.4 watts  
1% distortion at 146.7 watts
- All channels driven continuously into 8-ohm loads:  
0.1% distortion at 119.1 watts  
1% distortion at 132.6 watts
- Analog frequency response in Pure Direct mode:  
-0.77 dB at 10 Hz; -0.22 dB at 20 Hz  
-0.13 dB at 20 kHz; -0.80 dB at 50 kHz
- Analog frequency response with signal processing:  
-0.58 dB at 10 Hz; -0.18 dB at 20 Hz  
-0.29 dB at 20 kHz; -56.67 dB at 50 kHz

This graph shows that the SR9600's left channel, from CD input to speaker output with two channels driving 8-ohm loads, reaches 0.1-percent distortion at 148.4 watts and 1-percent distortion at 185.7 watts. Into 4 ohms, the amplifier reaches 0.1-percent distortion at 242.1 watts and 1-percent distortion at 280.9 watts.

Response from the multichannel input to the speaker output in Pure Direct mode measures -0.28 dB at 10 Hz, -0.08 dB at 20 Hz, -0.14 dB at 20 kHz, and -0.86 dB at 50 kHz. THD+N from the amplifier was less than 0.009 percent at 1 kHz when driving 2.83 volts into an 8-ohm load. Crosstalk at 1 kHz driving 2.83 volts into an 8-ohm load was -95.44 dB left to right and -92.66 dB right to left. The signal-to-noise ratio with 2.83 volts driving an 8-ohm load from 10 Hz to 24 kHz with "A" weighting was -102.80 dB.

From the Dolby Digital input to the loudspeaker output, the left channel measures -0.08 dB at 20 Hz and -0.22 dB at 20 kHz. The center channel measures -0.09 dB at 20 Hz and -0.24 dB at 20 kHz, and the left surround channel measures -0.09 dB at 20 Hz and -0.23 dB at 20 kHz. From the Dolby Digital input to the line-level output, the LFE channel is -0.02 dB at 20 Hz when referenced to the level at 40 Hz and reaches the upper 3-dB down point at 119 Hz and the upper 6-dB down point at 123 Hz. —MJP



▲ It's not as flashy as the receiver's touchscreen remote, but the DV9600's remote gets the job done.

at 60 Hz, but the D7s' bass was too lean. To put it another way, I just prefer the richer, warmer tonal balance that the 80-Hz crossover provides. That's the nice thing about this Snell/Marantz system: It's easy to tune the sound to your liking. And, if you'd rather not bother with all that techie stuff, sit back and let the SR9600's M.R.A.C. (Marantz Room Acoustic Calibration) auto-setup system do the number crunching for you.

### Start Me Up

Starting with the Rolling Stones' *Four Flicks* DVD boxed set, I knew I was in for a good time. The box contains three complete concerts from the Stones' 2002-'03 world tour, but I stuck with my hometown show in New York City's Madison Square Garden. The sense of being there, feeling the band and the crowd's

energy, pumped me up. Mick Jagger's vocals were in great shape, and his stage antics kept my eyes entertained. But, as I sat there taking it all in, I couldn't help but feel that the Stones are really Keith Richards' band. As I watched him strut about the stage, I had no doubt that he was running the show, and his opening stabbing guitar licks on "Honky Tonk Women" sent shivers up my spine.

*Stay*, a moody psycho thriller starring Ewan McGregor as a dedicated shrink and Ryan Gosling as his suicidal patient, put me into nail-biting mode. The DV9600 matched the film's dazzling visuals with a surround mix that provided a wraparound curtain of muttering voices, guttural breathing, throbbing beats, and a menagerie of unsettling sounds. The system reproduced the end-over-end car crash on the Brooklyn Bridge with

frightening physicality and clarity. The Basis 300's bass delivered the whiplash impact I often associate with larger subs without forfeiting the tuneful definition I crave.

I was feeling bruised and battered, so I settled into the soothing sounds of Neil Young's *Prairie Wind* DVD. The high-resolution 96/24 stereo mix had such a remarkably three-dimensional quality. I had to check the disc to make sure I wasn't listening in surround. Nope, it's just stereo, but it was as 3-D as stereo ever gets. Plain-vanilla CDs, like the jump-jazz soundtrack to Robert Altman's *Kansas City*, were spectacularly vivid. Talk about high energy. The re-creation of the 1930s-era improvised cutting contests—where jazz musicians would try to out-swing each other—took on a life of their own. Lesser components and speakers can make this music sound harsh, but it was a total joy here.

The highly charged intimacy of Steve Earle's solo acoustic performance on his *Live at Montreux 2005* DVD took my breath away. The Snell/Marantz system flat-out disappeared as a presence in my home theater. I felt Earle's passion as if the man and his guitar were right there in front of me. This effect was, after all, exactly what Saul Marantz and Peter Snell were striving for. I bet they'd love the sound of this system, and I think you will, too. 🎧

AT A GLANCE DV9600 DISC PLAYER	
	<p><b>FEATURES</b></p> <p>Playable formats: DVD-Audio/-Video, DVD-R/RW, CD, CD-R/RW, SACD</p> <p>Dimensions (H x W x D, inches): 4.5 x 17.3 x 15.1</p> <p>Weight (pounds): 19</p> <p>Price: \$2,099</p>
	<p><b>CONNECTIONS</b></p> <p>Video: HDMI (1), component video (1), S-video (1), composite video (1)</p> <p>Audio: Coaxial digital (1), optical digital (1), stereo analog (1), 7.1 channel (1), iLink IEEE 1394 (1)</p> <p>Additional: RS-232 (1), Flasher in (1), RC in/out (1)</p>

SR9600 A/V RECEIVER AND DV9600 DISC PLAYER					OVERALL RATING
Build Quality	Value	Features	Performance	Ergonomics	<p><b>94</b></p> <p>By every measure of quality, these top-tier Marantz components score with the very best. The receiver's features outpace many far more expensive separate components, and the sound quality is no less impressive.</p>
<p>→ Copper-plated chassis shields the sensitive internal circuitry</p> <p>→ The SR9600's massive heat sinks keep the output devices cool</p> <p>→ Disc player offers upgraded audio and video circuitry</p>	<p>→ SR9600 comes with a three-year warranty; that's a year or two more than some receivers</p> <p>→ The DV9600 offers 480i, 480p, 720p, 1080i, and 1080p output over its HDMI connection</p>	<p>→ Marantz's HDMI 1.1 connections works with HD video, Dolby, DTS, DVD-Audio, and CD</p> <p>→ M.R.A.C. auto-setup system also performs nine-band equalization on your speakers</p>	<p>→ Provides power to spare and a highly transparent sound</p> <p>→ Best-ever receiver sound with SACDs and DVD-Audio discs</p> <p>→ Performs well with two-channel audio</p>	<p>→ SR9600's two-way touchscreen remote lets you check settings on the touchscreen</p> <p>→ Single-wire HDMI audio/video connection simplifies hookup chores</p>	
<b>94</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>94</b>	

### General information

SR9600 A/V Receiver, \$4,199; DV9600 Disc Player, \$2,099 → Marantz America, (630) 741-0300, [www.marantz.com](http://www.marantz.com) → Dealer Locator Code MAR