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# Sherwood Newcastle R-865

The heavyweight. **BY MARK FLEISCHMANN**



▲ The backlit remote has an LCD and an easy-to-locate navigational keypad with big, blue buttons.

**The most reliable guide to power ratings** isn't the specs provided by the manufacturers but the measurements made by our technical editor. He follows the mandates of the Federal Trade Commission in measuring power output and distortion with all channels continuously driven (along with a less-demanding two-channel spec). When objective third-party measurements aren't available, here's a quick-and-dirty means of sorting high-power receivers from the junk: Just feel the weight. Aside from the nefarious inclusion of useless lead weights, more pounds

indicate either the presence of a heavier power supply or a heavier, more-sturdy chassis—ideally, both. All things being equal, with conventional amplifiers, you don't need expensive test gear to figure out that a 50-pound model is likely to play louder and cleaner than a 15-pound lightweight, even if both are rated at 100 watts per channel.

By that standard, the R-865 is the heavyweight in our foursome. At 49.4 pounds, it weighs a good 8.4 pounds more than the runner-up, a margin large enough to be significant. The others fall into a fairly uniform range between 37.5 and 41 pounds. In this case, is the extra weight due to inefficient design, added pig iron, or extra power-output capabilities? Read the HT Labs box to see how this unit compares with the competition on the test bench.

The R-865 also offers the most complete selection of Dolby

processing modes in the group. That includes not only Dolby EX and Pro Logic II but also Pro Logic IIx, Virtual Speaker, and Headphone. The front panel's fetching shade of blue-gray makes it quite handsome. It stands up to close examination—of the four, Sherwood's fit and finish are the best. The front panel has a row of buttons above the flip-down door that allow you to select video or audio inputs and manipulate surround modes. Of course, you can always use the jog dial or remote to do these things, but Sherwood is the only manufacturer to provide all three options. When I step up to the rack to load a disc, I like to select the input and surround mode from the receiver's front panel, so the Sherwood made my life a bit easier. Its remote has the best set of navigation keys, with large, blue triangles that are easy to find (even by

SHERWOOD NEWCASTLE R-865					OVERALL RATING
Build Quality	Value	Features	Performance	Ergonomics	93
→ The R-865 is the heavyweight champ of this roundup → The gray-blue front panel has a distinctive appearance	→ Sherwood delivers a whole lotta receiver for the price, but competing products have raised the bar by adding automated features that are absent here	→ Component-output conversion and DPLIIx are pluses → At this price, we now expect auto setup and room EQ	→ The airy, detailed highs court comparison with high-end two-channel products → Lots of clean power for full-range speakers	→ This is a traditional receiver, and traditional receivers are a pain to use → The front-panel controls are well thought out	
95	92	91	95	88	
<b>General information</b> R-865, \$1,499 Sherwood America, (582) 741-0960, <a href="http://www.sherwoodusa.com">www.sherwoodusa.com</a> Dealer Locator Code SHR					The R-865's heavy construction and pure, detailed, unlabored sound may be enough to overcome traditional receiver ergonomics for advanced users.

feel)—plus an LCD and blue, button-activated backlighting.

The R-865 is one of two receivers in this group with component video conversion. Anything that enters through the composite or S-video inputs can exit through the component video output. Most receivers treat each of these analog video interfaces as a separate path: If you connect your satellite box to the receiver using S-video, the receiver can feed that signal to the video display using only S-video. Converting all inputs to component eliminates redundant wiring (and multiple rounds of switching) between the receiver and display.

Aside from front-panel design and video hookups, the Sherwood is more of an ergonomic challenge to the user than the other three. It's a traditional receiver with no auto-setup routine. As a reviewer, I'm used to punching my way through setup menus—and had no particular problems with this one—but I've had years of practice. For a consumer, especially a newbie, punching through this receiver's menus, with the manual in your lap, would take a lot longer than it would to simply activate the other receivers' auto setups. To match channel levels, you'll need to buy an SPL meter.


Your reward for all that work is stunning sound with fairly powerful dynamics and an unlabored feeling that lent an emotional edge to musical peaks and movie effects. What really made this receiver sound different than the others, however, was its high-frequency extension. It was the cleanest and purest of the bunch, with a degree of transparency that resembled a good stereo integrated amplifier more than a surround receiver. A slightly reticent recording like the

Telarc disc of Brahms' *Symphony No. 2* from the Netherlands Radio Symphony acquired more tonal color and better held my attention. If your ears are calibrated to high-end two-channel material, listening to most surround

receivers is like wearing a ski cap. Listening to various Telarc SACDs with the Sherwood was like pulling the cap off. 🎧

\* *Mark Fleischmann* is the author of *Practical Home Theater* ([www.quietriverpress.com](http://www.quietriverpress.com)).

## AT A GLANCE SHERWOOD NEWCASTLE R-865



### CONNECTIONS:

**Inputs:**  
Video: component (2), S-video (5), composite (5)  
Audio: coaxial digital (2), optical digital (3), eight-channel analog (1), stereo analog (6)

**Outputs:**  
Video: component (1), S-video (2), composite (2)  
Audio: optical digital (1), stereo analog (3), preamp (1)

**Additional:**  
Digi-Link (for Sherwood components), RS-232 (1), 12-volt trigger (1), infrared jack (1)

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

### FEATURES:

<p><b>Processing Modes:</b></p> <p>THX Certification: No</p> <p>Audio D/A Converter: Analog Devices AD-1852</p> <p>Number of Amp Channels: 7</p> <p>Amp Power (per channel): 100, into 8 ohms</p> <p>Amp Frequency Response: 10 Hz—100 kHz</p> <p>Dimensions (H x W x D): 7.75 x 17.4 x 17.75</p> <p>Weight (in pounds): 49.4</p>	<p>Dolby: Digital 5.1, EX, Pro Logic II/IIx, Virtual Speaker, Headphone</p> <p>DTS: DTS, ES, 96/24, Neo:6</p> <p>Other: 13 DSP modes</p>
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### HT Labs Measures: Sherwood Newcastle R-865



driving 8-ohm loads, reaches 0.1% distortion at 98.2 watts and 1% distortion at 111.9 watts. Into 4 ohms, the amplifier reaches 0.1% distortion at 126.5 watts and 1% distortion at 156.1 watts.

Response from the multichannel input to the speaker output measures  $-0.37$  dB at 10 Hz,  $-0.11$  dB at 20 Hz,  $-0.13$  dB at 20 kHz, and  $-0.81$  dB at 50 kHz. THD+N from the amplifier was less than 0.014% 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  $-76.87$  dB left to right and  $-88.73$  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  $-99.57$  dB<sub>rA</sub>.

From the Dolby Digital input to the loudspeaker output, the left channel measures  $-0.35$  dB at 20 Hz and  $-0.62$  dB at 20 kHz. The center channel measures  $-0.31$  dB at 20 Hz and  $-0.64$  dB at 20 kHz, and the left surround channel measures  $-0.31$  dB at 20 Hz and  $-0.65$  dB at 20 kHz. From the Dolby Digital input to the line-level output, the LFE channel is  $-0.15$  dB at 20 Hz when referenced to the level at 40 Hz and reaches the upper 3-dB down point at 98 Hz and the upper 6-dB down point at 109 Hz. — *MJP*

⚡ **Five channels driven into 8-ohm loads:**  
0.1% distortion at 71.1 watts; 1% distortion at 93.2 watts

⚡ **Analog frequency response in pure mode:**  
 $-0.54$  dB at 10 Hz;  $-0.16$  dB at 20 Hz;  $-0.06$  dB at 20 kHz;  $-0.40$  dB at 50 kHz

⚡ **Analog frequency response with signal processing:**  
 $-1.61$  dB at 10 Hz;  $-0.50$  dB at 20 Hz;  $-0.64$  dB at 20 kHz;  $-58.31$  dB at 50 kHz.

This graph shows that the R-865's left channel, from CD input to speaker output with two channels

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