

\$800-\$2000

Denon AVR-3806 7.1-channel A/V Receiver

This AVR's advanced auto EQ system puts every seat in the sweet spot. — by Neil Gader



Denon A/V receivers are known for delivering genuine technological advancements, not whoopee-cushion gimmickry, and the mid-priced AVR-3806 is no exception. With the addition of XM capability, HDMI v.1.1 switching with analog source/video upconversion and HDCD decoding, this 120Wpc 7.1-channel receiver easily trumps its overachieving forbear, the AVR-3805.¹ The 3806 also features Audyssey Lab's MultiEQ XT auto-setup/room EQ system—technology previously reserved for elite, premium-priced components.²

Sonically, the AVR-3806 did not disappoint. Credit Denon's performance-oriented PURE DIRECT mode, which bypasses all unnecessary video and audio circuitry. The Denon also caters to audiophiles by allowing reassignment of unused surround back channels for biamping duties up front.

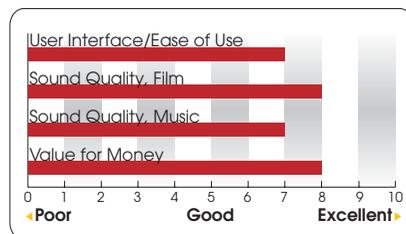
The AVR-3806's voicing was similar to that of Denon's earlier 2805, strongly midrange-oriented, infused with rich textures, and possessed of a darker overall personality. Treble was lightly rolled off, resulting in reduced high-frequency "air" and slightly narrowed soundstages. Nevertheless, orchestral harmonics were well preserved and sibilance was held in check. Where the AVR-3806 distanced itself was in bass extension, offering slam that left the

2805 gasping for air in comparison. Even so, the 3806 gave up some control and definition when pressed hard. On Bryn Terfel's rendition of "Il Mio Cuore Va" [*Sings Favourites*: DG], the largest bass drum crescendos demonstrated an exaggerated roundedness that undermined the drum's native timbre.

Most auto-setup/EQ protocols leave me cold, but the Audyssey system is one I'm inclined to use. The key difference is that Audyssey takes measurements at multiple listening positions, collecting both time delay and frequency information. Crunching that data, Audyssey compensates for room/speaker interactions, setting specific EQ curves and crossover points for each speaker. The result: an enhanced sweet spot for all listening positions. On James Taylor's *Live at the Beacon Theater* the before/after comparison was startling. Image focus, soundstage width, and soundspace continuity were markedly improved, and center channel information was more stable and better integrated. On a sound effects *tour de force* such as *King Kong*, there was not only greater energy but improved low level detail and a far greater sense of envelopment.

The Denon AVR-3806 is a sweet combination of innovation, performance, and value. And I can't say enough about MultiEQ XT from Audyssey

Labs. It adds to the home theater experience immeasurably, proving once again that Denon knows the difference between gimmicks and genuine advancements to the art of surround sound. **5+3**



The Last Word



- Smooth, midrange-oriented voicing
- HDMI support
- Value
- Audyssey MultiEQ XT system really works



- Bass loses some control and definition when the receiver is pushed hard.

Specifications

Denon AVR-3806
7.1-channel A/V Receiver, \$1299
 • Dimensions: 17.1" x 6.7" x 16.9"
 • Weight: 38 lbs

Manufacturer Information

Denon Electronics (USA), Inc.
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1. An iPod docking station for the AVR-3806 will be offered later this year. 2. Audyssey's MultiEQ XT system debuted on Denon's then flagship AVR-5805.