

Marantz | M-CR603 | £500

Solid unit that's Air-raising

Remember last year Marantz launched a stylish little one-box CD receiver, the M-CR502? Well, this year it's really got the bit between its teeth, with a three-strong line-up of systems under the Melody banner.

There's a revised version of the original, the M-CR503 Melody Music; the Blu-ray-playing multichannel M-ER803 Melody Movie; and the system we have here, the network-capable M-CR603, or Melody Media.

Not only does it have the usual CD playback, DAB/DAB+/FM/AM tuner, it also allows digital hook-up and control of an iPod via the front-panel USB socket.

Core appeal for Marantz

Enough, already? Not quite: with a £40 upgrade, the Marantz will also act as an AirPlay client for iPods, iPhones, iPads and PCs running Apple's iTunes 10. At a click and a flick, you can stream music from your device.

Not into Apple? You can add an optional Bluetooth audio receiver to the rear-panel, which lets you stream music from more devices.

With Apple weighing in with AirPlay, this solid Marantz is shaping up to be a real contender



Back to the unit itself. This is a slick, fully loaded little system, and it has the performance to back it all up.

We tried it with everything from CDs to tracks streamed from iPods and a NAS drive, and it shows speed and substance. It's dynamic, exciting and in control, even when we threw some tracks with really seismic bass at it. There's no denying that the Marantz is an exciting listen.

The M-CR603 has the power to rock out with some serious speakers, too, and offers a tempting proposition, fitting between the great-value Denon and the more expensive, but more accomplished, Arcam Solo Mini (p56). If that network capability appeals, you shouldn't hesitate to give the Marantz an audition.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR A range of facilities way beyond expectations; slick design and build

AGAINST Needs decent speakers to make the most of its capabilities

VERDICT The Marantz is packing, and its facilities make some look a bit old-fashioned

TECH SPECS

Power 50W **Plays** CD, CR-R/-RW, MP3, DAB, FM, MW, internet radio
Inputs USB, 3 x analogue audio, RCA, coaxial digital **Outputs** Analogue audio **Headphones** Yes **Size (hwd)** 11 x 28 x 30cm