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Amplifiers

Harman Kardon HK 3490

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Harman Kardon HK 3490 [Explain star rating](#)

RRP \$799.00

Review Date Tuesday, 11th of November, 2008

What's Hot Powerful, clean amplification, great looks

What's Not No universal remote

The Final Word If you need a powerful stereo audio receiver, then look no further than the HK 3490. Teamed up with some capable floor-standing speakers it's able to reproduce high-quality audio with no flaws whatsoever.

Notes # This product is no longer available directly from the manufacturer. It may be available in retail and distribution channels, or second hand. The price displayed is the price at review time and the last available recommended retail price.

harman/kardon

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Harman Kardon HK 3490

Powerful and stylish stereo receiver.

Campbell Simpson 11/11/2008 13:40:00

Harman Kardon is a legendary name in the home theatre business. The products it releases are by and large of exceedingly high quality. The HK 3490 is no different. It's a stereo receiver that provides fantastically clean and crisp amplification, as well as a host of extra features that make it an attractive prospect.

It's a great product to look at: a modern yet classy AV component with a minimalist style. The clear, simple LCD screen is integrated into the fascia of the unit, with a hollow volume control wheel taking pride of place on the right side of the face. There are plenty of buttons — we counted 20 — on the front, but thankfully they are organised into a small row. The labels are difficult to read, but we don't foresee these buttons being used particularly often — that's what the complex and comprehensive remote control is for.

The remote control has plenty of buttons, but it isn't a universal model like we've seen with other receivers. Unfortunately, this means it can't be used with other products in your home cinema; if you're really serious you'll have access to a dedicated universal remote like the [Harmony One](#) anyway.

As you'd expect, you can switch between a multitude of audio inputs: two digital audio inputs (both coaxial and optical) as well as seven analog stereo inputs, including a phono input for connecting a record player. Only composite video switching is available, but this speaks to the HK 3490's focused role as an audio receiver rather than a jack of all trades.

There are also several analog outputs and two subwoofer pre-outs, so you're able to daisy-chain plenty more audio equipment if you have it. There is a connector for Harman Kardon's Bridge II iPod dock, for easy playback from compatible Apple products like the [iPod touch \(2nd Generation\)](#). Also present is an AM/FM tuner which has exceptionally good reception; even in difficult conditions it was able to resolve a clear signal.

The HK 3490 can handle a continuous output of 120 Watts to two channels simultaneously. This is a great number, and it's bolstered by the fact that Harman Kardon quotes its ratings with both channels driven — some other manufacturers make quotes with a single channel driven for bogus figures. The amplifier can handle an output from 10 Hertz all the way to a ridiculous ceiling of 110KHz. Human hearing rolls off above 20KHz at the best of times — so there's a lot of head-room — but it's generally accepted that higher-order harmonics from these inaudible notes filter down to audible levels. In layman's terms, it's never a bad thing to have such a high range of frequency response.

All this translates into perfectly smooth and powerful audio reproduction. Maybe it's just placebo effect, but we did find higher-range treble notes a little clearer and brighter when played through the HK 3490 as opposed to our benchmark [TX-SR805](#). We used a set of [AAD M Series](#) front speakers for our testing and while these are relatively cheap they were still able to uncover a few subtle differences in sound. The HK 3490 has more than enough dynamic range to power even the most

demanding floor-standing speakers.

The receiver does get quite warm during its operation, but thankfully not hot enough that it needs to be placed separately from your other home theatre components.

With a very reasonable price of \$799 the HK 3490 is a great proposition for anyone wishing to enjoy pure, simple stereo sound.