

Marantz PowerLine Audio

Marantz has already begun shipping its first powerline network multiroom-audio system and will likely incorporate the technology in more products in the future, marketing and product development VP Kevin Zarow said. The company also hopes to expand the capabilities of its current digital audio via electrical distribution (DAvED) system to stream two sources simultaneously over powerlines, up from one source at a time. DAvED is based on Mitsubishi Materials-developed technology, customized by Marantz, to stream CD-quality audio "hundreds of feet" over a home's powerlines in digital form. It appears in a \$1,200-suggested package consisting of the 7.1-channel ZR6001 A/V receiver and a ZC4001 table-radio-style client that incorporates two speakers; a 2x10-watt amp; inputs for local sources, such as TVs; and SRS WOW technology, which expands the stereo image, elevates the image to add height and extends perceived bass response. Additional clients are a suggested \$299. Up to six clients play back a single audio source simultaneously. All sources, from satellite radio to music servers, must be connected to the A/V receiver, which is always able to play a separate source while the clients play another source. From a remote room, consumers can use a client's top-mount controls or their own universal remote to remotely select up to 10 separate sources to stream. From the clients and their remotes, consumers will also be able to change volume, select discs and select tracks through an up/down button. The clients do not show song or disc titles on their displays. Marantz, known for products that connect to custom-installed multiroom audio systems, is entering the do-it-yourself market, Zarow explained, to help installers and retailers keep a potential client who might otherwise walk because of budget constraints or because they live in an apartment or condo where running wires through walls is prohibited. Because it is a do-it-yourself product, Marantz might open up distribution beyond its existing base of 600 dealers with 800 storefronts, most of which focus on hard-wired installs, he added. Marantz opted for a powerline-based solution over wireless because of reliability, Zarow said. In fact, a focus on reliability and CD-quality sound prompted Marantz to offer streaming of only one source at a time in the initial release, he noted. Marantz's proprietary technology uses a multipath-carrier technique to enable music streams to bypass the frequencies on which powerline noise might occur. If you currently have a PowerLine network in your home you will unfortunately not be able to connect the Marantz devices. Zarow said. Marantz also uses compression technology to squeeze the audio signal between frequencies on which noise might occur. The signal is then decompressed for playback without a reduction in audio quality, he said. "It's a good bet you'll see DAvED in other Marantz products," Zarow said, without mentioning a time line. The company is also considering additional clients that would lack amplifiers and speakers but could be connected to existing audio systems from mini systems to high-quality clock radios. One DAvED A/V receiver will light up all electrical outlets in a house that has only one circuit-breaker box. In large homes with two circuit-breaker boxes, DAvED would light up only about half the outlets, but large homes aren't the system's target, said Zarow, who is also marketing VP of the Escent and Snell brands, all owned by parent D&M Holdings.