

New Receiver Line from Pioneer



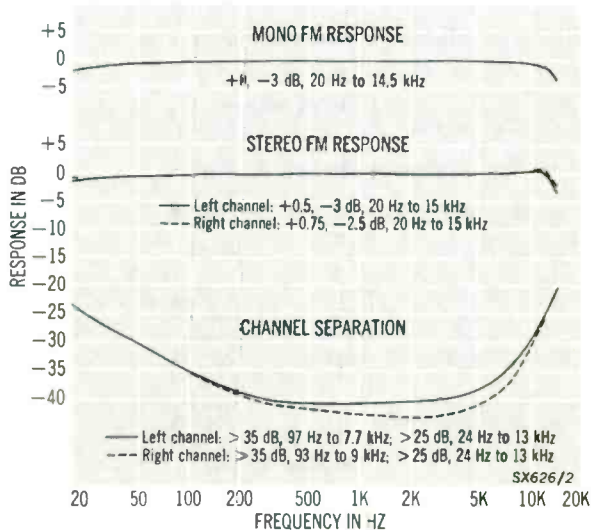
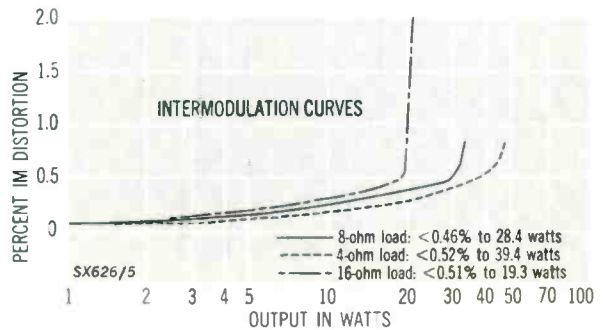
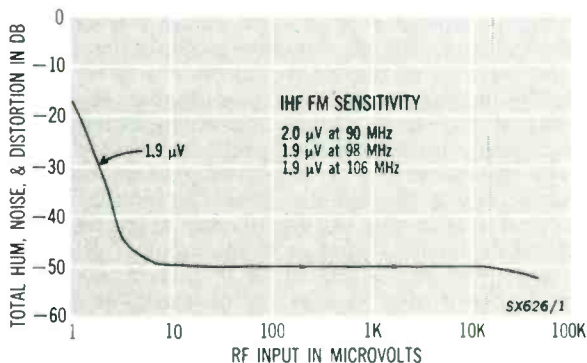
The Equipment: Pioneer SX-626, a stereo FM/ AM receiver in wood case. Dimensions: 5¾ by 17¾ by 12½ inches. Price: \$279.95. Manufacturer: Pioneer Electronics Corp., Japan; U.S. distributor: U.S. Pioneer Electronics Corp., 178 Commerce Rd., Carlstadt, N.J. 07072.

Comment: This is the first unit we have tested from a new group introduced early this year by Pioneer. More recently additional models have been added to the series to make it the "current generation" of receivers from the company. The SX-626, a moderate-priced unit in the group, is somewhat smaller and less elaborate than Pioneer receivers we have tested in the past. It has no remote-control unit, for example, nor special provision for moving-magnet phono pickups. What it does have is solid quality.

The front panel, which has an attractive appearance that might be called a "smoky" look by comparison to past Pioneer styling—and indeed by contrast to most current styling—has a dark glass tuning section illuminated in blue with light-up colored selector and stereo (for FM) indicators. When the selector is set for FM or AM, a signal-strength meter to the left of the dial also lights up; the tuning knob is at the right. The remaining controls are ranged along the bottom: speaker switch (five positions plus speakers off and power off), stepped bass and treble controls, three button switches (high filter, low filter, FM muting), balance and volume controls, four more buttons (loudness, tape monitor 1, tape monitor 2, stereo/mono), and the selector knob (AM, mono FM, auto mono/stereo FM, two phono positions, microphone, and aux). The microphone jack, which feeds a

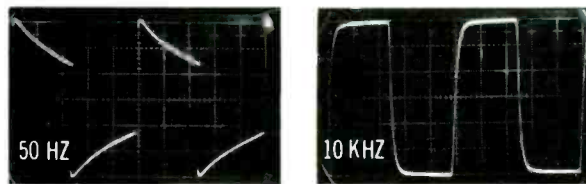
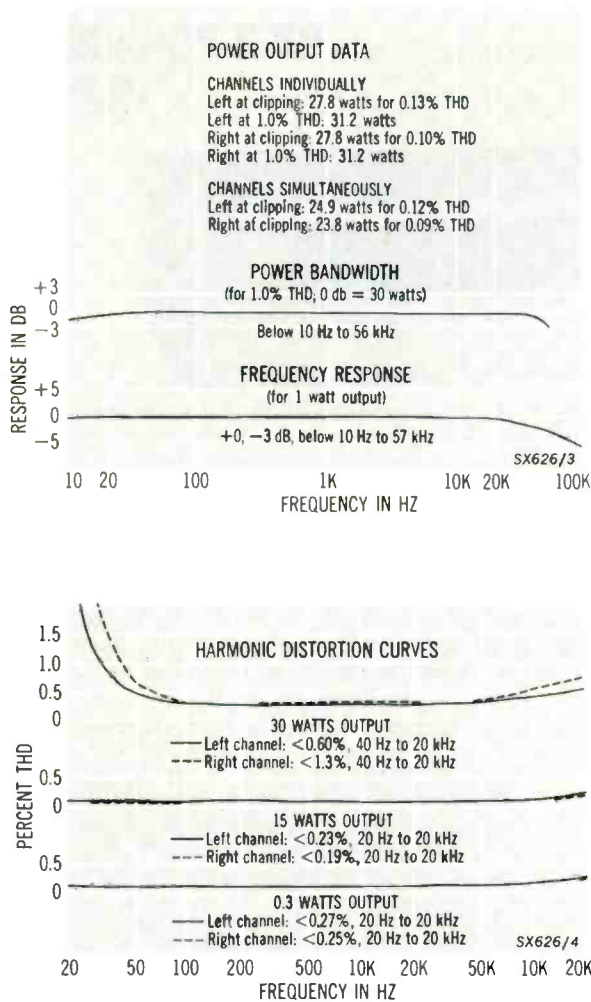
mono signal to both channels, is to the right of this knob; the headphone jack, which is live at all times, is between the speaker selector and the tone controls.

Speaker connections on the back panel are via the special polarity-coded plugs that Pioneer has used on other recent receivers. The plugs themselves have screw connections for speaker wiring, and jacks are provided for three speaker pairs. Most of the antenna connections use binding posts with knurled knobs; the exception is that for 75-ohm FM antenna lead, which has a screw for the hot lead and a special clamp for the shield. There are two convenience AC outlets: one switched, one unswitched. There also is a tape recorder



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Square-wave response

DIN socket. The remaining connections are phono-jack pairs for the two phono inputs, aux, and tape recorder inputs and outputs. Both phono inputs will accept standard moving-coil cartridges. The input and output connections for the second tape recorder also are marked for use with an outboard decoder for matrixed quadraphonics. In addition there are pre-out/main-in connections (for use with any sort of outboard equipment—including a matrix decoder—that you may wish to insert between preamp and power amplifier sections of the receiver). The unit is delivered with removable jumpers bridging these connections.

We did use the SX-626 as part of a quadraphonic system, connecting the decoder to the tape 2 jacks and using the tape 2 monitor switch to cue in the decoder. This put the decoder ahead of the volume control, which then affected the SX-626 (carrying the front channels) only. The system worked fine, and indeed would be required with an ultra-simple decoder having no straight-through mono/ stereo (that is, nondecoding) position on its function switch. Users may prefer to insert most decoders at the pre/main jumpers, however, leaving the tape 2 connections free for use with a second deck.

This point is elaborated on partly to suggest the versatility of Pioneer's controls. Both in physical design—the elegantly precise handling of the pushbutton holes on the front panel for example—and in basic circuit options, Pioneer has studiously avoided a make-do approach; we wish we could say the same for all under-\$300 receivers. And this same approach is in evidence within the circuitry, as documented by CBS Labs.

The FM-section data all are fine for a receiver in this price class, and are moreover unusually consistent in their excellence. (Often one or two specifics in an otherwise excellent receiver will be merely so-so, but not here.) Much the same can be said of the amplifier section. Note that harmonic-distortion data are based on a 30-watt-per-channel output rating. This rating, while consistent with the rating practices of other manufacturers (and therefore our testing practices for their products), produces a rising harmonic-distortion curve in the extreme bass at full rated power. While the frequencies involved are below the reach of normal program material, we could have avoided this rising distortion by basing tests on an alternate Pioneer rating—and one that is unusually conservative for equipment in this price class (much competing equipment is rated for 1% THD at midband only, a technically questionable practice)—pegging output into 8 ohms at 20 watts per channel at 1% THD over the entire audio range with both channels driven. Taking all things together, then, we would characterize the amplifier section as having ample power to drive a pair of speakers—even quite inefficient ones—in most home installations at low distortion. Two pairs of speakers also can be used, though we'd suggest avoiding the more inefficient models. The speaker switching on the SX-626 does not provide for simultaneous operation of all three speaker pairs.

Considering the excellent "feel" and detailing of the unit and its performance, we would rate the SX-626 as a good value and a particularly enjoyable unit to use.

Pioneer SX-626 Receiver Additional Data

Tuner Section			
Capture ratio	2.0 dB		
Alternate-channel selectivity	66 dB		
S/N ratio	71.5 dB		
IM distortion	0.5%		
THD	Mono	L ch	R ch
80 Hz	0.27%	0.40%	0.42%
1 kHz	0.24%	0.40%	0.40%
10 kHz	0.20%	2.7%	2.5%
19-kHz pilot	-50.5 dB		
38-kHz subcarrier	-58 dB		
Amplifier Section			
Damping factor	66		
Input characteristics (for 30 watts output)			
	Sensitivity	S/N ratio	
phono 1	2.4 mV	66.0 dB	
phono 2	2.4 mV	64.0 dB	
aux	210 mV	90.0 dB	
tape monitors 1 & 2	210 mV	90.0 dB	
microphone	2.2 mV	59.5 dB	