



*The AVM 30 (shown) incorporates design improvements for even better performance.

“Yet again Anthem continues to raise the bar.”

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BY SANDY BIRD

MAJOR CHANGES

- Auto-Digital Input Sensing by Source
- Multiple Component-Input Assignment
- Multiple Digital-Input Assignment
- Separate Cinema and Music Speaker Configurations, assignable to each source
- Room Resonance Filter to remove primary in-room bass standing-wave
- v2.1 Serial Command List (available in Custom section of Anthem website at www.anthemAV.com) includes many additional new commands relevant to mode preset/selection.
- And many many more ...

INTRODUCTION

Anthem has just released version 2.10 software for the AVM 20 Surround Sound Processor. This software upgrade is available for download off Anthem's website at no cost. I have been using the

beta release of the program for a couple of months, and I must say it is an excellent piece of code. You will need a version 2 AVM 20 processor or have already upgraded your version one AVM 20 to v.2 status in order to install the new version. If you are still using version 1 of the AVM 20, you might want to read Brian Florian's review of the version 2 upgrade (available on the Anthem website).

The upgrade could not be easier. To get started, simply download the upgrade from Anthem's website and unzip the file. Then, connect the AVM 20 to your computer with a standard DB-9 serial cable (straight through wiring, not the null modem version), and start the upgrade by double clicking on the program. From there follow Anthem's simple instructions, which basically consist of powering the unit off and clicking the upgrade button. The program will

go through several stages reprogramming the AVM 20 and will keep you informed via the status line. The whole process takes about 5 minutes.

WHAT'S NEW

In the software upgrade, Anthem has gone to great length to increase the flexibility of this already incredible product. Something new is included for everyone, making this upgrade one you won't want to miss. If you don't own an AVM 20 and are considering the purchase of a new SSP, this is one of our favorites.

To start things off, Anthem now allows users to configure each input with predefined surround modes depending on the format of the input signal being fed to the processor. For instance, if the processor sees a DD-5.1 signal, the user can choose to have the unit automati-

cally change to THX Ultra 2 mode, and when that same input sees a DD-2.0 signal, it could switch to Dolby Pro logic II-Movie mode. Separate modes are available for the following formats: DD-2.0, DD-5.1, DTS-5.1 DD-EX, DTS-ES and the two-channel analog input. I find this to be a particularly nice feature since I use a DVD player for both CDs and DVDs.

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To extend the flexibility even further, component video and digital audio connections can be assigned to any input or even multiple inputs. You may be asking why you would do this with the digital connections, since every input on the AVM 20 has its own digital input. If you go back to my example of using a DVD player for both CDs and DVDs, you now have the ability to have different default surround modes depending on the input you have selected for any given source and/or format. In my system, I have the DVD player's digital input assigned to both the CD and DVD input. However, if you select the DVD input, you will get cinema based surround modes for all formats, but if you choose the CD input, you will get plain old two-channel stereo.

“The AVM 20 has always been a top-notch product in our books, and Anthem's customers would tell you their service is terrific.”

For music lovers out there, Anthem has given users the options to set up two speaker configurations, one for movies and one for music. The modes differ by allowing the user to choose different speaker and LFE configurations. This comes in especially handy if you prefer to use the standard 80 Hz crossover settings for movies (as recommended by THX), but when listening to music, have lower frequency crossover settings. This should allow the user to avoid localized subwoofer problems that plague some systems when using an 80 Hz crossover. You can even eliminate the LFE altogether if you wish. To avoid having to make the decision of which mode to use on a per input basis, the 'Auto-LFE' mode will choose the appropriate mode depending on the presence of LFE content.

Anthem has included several other features focused around the LFE channel in this release, of which my personal favorite is the addition of a notch filter to remove one room node. The notch filter is configured similar to a parametric equalizer and is flexible in terms of level, frequency, and width of the filter. Almost all home theaters have a hump somewhere between 20 and 80 Hz, so being able to remove it should result in a tighter more controlled bottom end. To make finding the node in your environment easier, test tone frequency sweeps are also included in the new software.

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Some of the other features include an adjustable mute level, a dithered digital output when A to D is set to 16-bit, and the auto sensing of digital inputs which will default to the analog inputs if not present. From a functionality perspective, the change list is even longer. AM/FM tuner users will experience some ease of use changes such as the 'stereo/high blend/mono' setting being stored per each preset. Anthem has also set up the scanning of the tuner banks to stay within their perspective presets and skip anything tuned to 530(AM) or 87.5(FM) (typically presets that were never used). The volume control has been changed to ramp slightly faster than the last software revision, and it does feel more natural when using the remote. Group audio delay now has direct access in real-time allowing for easier synchronization of the audio to video, and the dynamics settings are reset to normal when the main power is cycled.

Custom installers also get some additional features with version 2.1. Most of the front panel buttons can be locked with a serial command; the tuner can be adjusted without knowing specific frequencies and serial feedback for discrete volume commands. Since I don't use the serial commands, I will keep my comments to a minimum, but there is a new command list on Anthem's website for those interested. It is worth noting that Colin Miller, our Digital Audio Editor, and a professional installer, claims Anthem has one of the best, if not the best, command set for SSPs in custom installs.

CONCLUSIONS

I am happy to see manufacturers providing free software upgrades for their clients. The AVM 20 has always been a top notch product in our books, and Anthem's customers would tell you their service is terrific. Yet again Anthem continues to raise the bar.

