

Pioneer Avic-D3 Complete Review

Contributed by Jim Miller
Tuesday, 04 March 2008

Complete FIVE PAGE installation guide and review of the Pioneer Avic-D3 Navigation radio. Also described and reviewed are the Pioneer CD-BTB200 Bluetooth adapter, Pioneer CD-SB10 Sirius Satellite Radio controller, and the iPod interface. Click [HERE](#) or on the picture below to read the full review!

Pioneer Avic-D3X System Installation and Review:

After extensive searches for the "perfect radio" I came up with nothing that truly qualified. Kenwood had some great offerings but I read bad things about their interfaces and the blue buttons wouldn't match my interior. Alpine seemed like a great choice but I didn't like that the navigation was a docked portable unit. Sony was ruled out because they didn't appear to support Sirius which was a must because I needed the NFL and NASCAR channels. The Pioneer Avic-D3 seemed close to perfect but their Sirius interface left a lot to be desired.

Then luck came my way. The Avic-D3X package went on sale for \$200 off and included the BTB-200 bluetooth adapter, the iPod interface cable, and wireless remote control. That was tempting, but it just so happens that the same day Pioneer mass released the CD-SB10 Sirius bus adapter. No information was available about this new Sirius controller except that it worked with the Sirius SC-C1 universal tuner. Well, I took the plunge. I ordered the D3X package from Crutchfield and the Sirius components from Amazon.

What follows is a lot of installation pictures and notes. After that I will show screenshots of the different interfaces and offer my opinion.

UPS GUY IS MY FRIEND....

Three days apart the UPS truck delivered everything I needed to get started. Here are a few pictures of the equipment right out of the box.

Avic-D3x Box Containing the Avic-D3, Bluetooth Adapter, iPod Cable, and Wireless Remote Sirius SC-C1 and Pioneer CD-SB10 Sirius Controller Pioneer Wireless Remote Control and iPod Cable Close-Up of the Pioneer CD-SB10 PAC SW-PS Steering Wheel Controller Back of the D3 with and All Connections Front Profile Shot of Unmounted Pioneer Avic-D3

[CLICK HERE](#) to read about the installation with lots of pictures!

{mospagebreak title=Installation}INSTALLATION....I have plenty of install experience but it is 15-20 years old. Times have changed my friends. It used to be throw a head unit in the dash, hook up a constant power, switched power, ground and pre-amps. Not so anymore. The head unit is still the same but the Bluetooth module, Sirius Satellite radio modules, steering wheel controller... All of these things are separate components and require their own power, mounting place, and splices (tapping into vehicle wiring). The key is doing things right the first time. I sat in my house and patiently soldered together all of the harness connections and then used heat shrink tubing to seal the connections..Picture of the mess.. Close-up Showing Soldered Connections and Heat Shrink Once I got the Crutchfield wiring harness soldered to the D3 harness to my satisfaction it was time to put the radio in the mounting kit. This was relatively straight forward but if you want things to look right take your time. Insure you get the head unit flush on all four corners of the mounting plate. With the D3 mounted in the Metra mounting kit it was time to head to the garage. I carried all of the components to the garage and used my Bakflip tonneau cover as a staging area for the gear.. Most of the Components and Wiring on the Bed.. I cannot lie, the installation was a bit of a challenge to me, at least the planning and layout was. I started by removing the dash center stack trim. This is done simply by pulling at the bottom above the ash tray. It comes off hard the first time but a little easier thereafter. Once I pulled the trim I simply took out the four 7mm screws holding the radio in and was left with a hole in the dash opening and the stock Sirius receiver mounted in the stack. Dash With Radio Removed and Stock Sirius Receiver Visible I was really torn on the stock Sirius receiver. I didn't have a sheet metal shop to fabricate my own shelf and the Sirius receiver seemed to be perfect. So I just left it in and used it as a mount point for the rest of the components. Before I did anything else at thing point I had to tap into the dash wires necessary for everything to work. I needed to tap into 2 stock harness pins for the PAC steering wheel controller, 1 wire for the VSS (speed sensor), a constant 12v line and ground. I used the stock harness switched 12v and ground for the PAC steering wheel module but wanted to use a separate constant 12v and ground for the Sirius module and bluetooth module. Since both are low amp draw components I tapped directly into the cigarette lighter live and ground. The live is constant (regardless of the

ignition switch) and the ground is solid. As I am a non-smoker I figured this circuit should at least do me SOME good! Picture of All Wires Tapped as Necessary for Installtion Here You Can See The Pioneer Harness Hanging and the Associated Mess! OK, now that all of the power lines and harness tapping was complete, it was time to start putting components in place and running bus cabling. Let the real messiness begin! Before I installed the actual D3 I needed to wire up the back of it completely as I would not be able to access it later. In the next picture you can see the D3 in the dash and all associated wiring hanging haplessly below. You'll notice the stock Sirius receiver is hanging at an angle in the picture. The reason for that is I dropped the right side so that I could route wires behind the unit. Before I mounted anything else it was reattached solidly. When mounting the metra kit in the dash it looked great, but when I put the dash center console back on I noticed the top of the mount sat back a little further than the edge of the dash. I resolved this by buying some longer #8 machine screws and then stacking 3 #8 washers and taping them in the stack. I then applied a 3 washer stack between the mount kit and the dash on both top corners. This brought the kit to flush with the dash and really made a difference in the appearance. D3 Installed But a Mess of Wire Awaits! I mounted the Bluetooth adapter using velco (cheesy I know) on top of the old Sirius receiver. Below the receiver I used the factory Sirius tuner's mounting screws to attach the Sirius SC-C1 receiver. This positioned it perfectly to connect to the stock Sirius antenna and also provided a secure mounting point. In the pic below you can see the bluetooth module and Sirius receiver already in place, and the Pioneer Siriius bus controller staged for mounting. Getting Close! The Bigger the Mess the Closer We Are! Once I finally got everything mounted up the way I wanted to it was more than a typical rats nest! At the same time I have to admit that everything fit nicely where I placed it. I wrapped all the cabling as neatly as I could but when you're talking about this many cables/wires there's only so much you can do! All of the Components Mounted in Place Same Picture as Above, But Components Are Labeled. Now all I need to do is pop the center stack trim back on and pray to God that everything works! I recommend that once you have everything hooked up and mounted you test every aspect of the install before putting the dash back together and tightening everything down. In my case I was installing the PAC steering wheel button controller so I needed to leave the dash kit off until programming was complete anyway. Because I took my time and insured all of my wire taps were secure, everything was tightly wound, and mounting points were secure I had an easy time of programming the PAC and insuring everything worked. MISSION ACCOMPLISHED....With everything wired up and working the dash went back together perfectly. I did notice that with the Metra kit that the top of the mounting kit was set in a little further back than I liked, leaving a gap. I remedied this by buying longer mounting screws and stacking 4 washers between the mount kit and the dash on the top two screws. This worked like a charm and really trued up the install appearance. Back Together Again! A few notes on installation. The PAC steering wheel controller went MUCH smoother than I expected. After reading endless nightmares about resisters needed that weren't included, programming fiascos, etc, I expected the worst. Truth be told.. After I tapped into the two necessary harness wires the unit functioned perfectly and programming was straight forward. I highly recommend that for an F150 you follow the directions directly from the PAC site. All in all when you take your time and research thoroughly before starting, installation wasn't that hard. It took a lot of time (I probably spent 7hrs on this) but it was decent and definitely worth it! [CLICK HERE](#) to see the navigation and iPod interfaces as well as opinions and details of both!{mospagebreak title=Navigation and iPod}IMPRESSIONS AND INTERFACE REVIEWI was and am quite pleased with the Avic-D3. It is not the "perfect" solution for me as nothing could be, but for the price it can't be beat. To get a similarly equipped setup from any other manufacturer you would be at a minimum another \$500 in the hole, realistically more. Without further ado I'd like to break down the different interfaces/functions and offer a bit of opinion of each.. NAVIGATION:Navigation with the Avic-D3 is decent. It does not do text to voice so other than highways and interstates it does not announce road names. It does however show you a nice blow-up of the intersection you are turning at and clearly shows the road you are turning on in the upper left hand side of the screen, along with the road you are currently on at the bottom right. I will not lie, I don't think the navigation on this unit is as good as several of the standalone units I have messed with. That said, it gets you from point A to point B and looks decent doing it. There are several cool bells and whistles available including speed, turning force, current relation to the ground, etc. Most people slam this deck because it only has one DVD slot. In order to calculate routes the navigation DVD has to be in the player. Once you've set your route you can remove the navigation DVD and listen to CDs, watch DVDs, etc. For someone that will be using the DVD slot a lot yes, I can see this being a nescience and unacceptable. For me, who listens exclusively to the iPod and Sirius radio there is no problem at all. I leave the navigation DVD in the unit and forget about it. Pioneer was able to control the cost significantly by only having one drive and not needing a motorized face plate. I personally applaud them for it as I appreciate the lower price and don't need the additional drive. The absolute worst way you can test a GPS is by having it take you somewhere that you already know how to get to. The GPS' point is to take you to a location you did know how to get to. No, it may not take you every short cut, and it may even take you slightly out of the way, but the bottom line is that it gets you there. In that regard I can honestly say the D3 has not failed me yet. I am not going to go on more than that in regards to navigation as I honestly believe the opinions will vary greatly person to person based on their expectations and previous experiences. Suffice to say that it works and the interface is pretty speedy considering it is DVD based. Destination Selection Screen of Navigation. The Map Screen and Highlighted Route at .5 Mile Scale The Vehicle Dynamics Screen (Mutiple Options) AUDIO SOURCES:I am really pleased with how intuitive the menus are and how freely you can get from screen to screen. It takes a few days to grow comfortable with it and learn the little short cuts, but once you do it's really logical and very nice. Below you'll see the audio source selection screen. Notice that the "M-CD" (changer) and "XM" are grayed out. I don't have them and it doesn't allow you to accidentally click them only to get a black screen. Disc is also grayed out because I have the navigation DVD in the player and there's nothing to listen to on it. IPOD CONTROL:This is the bright spot of the Avic-D3. The iPod interface is first rate. You can utilize the device pretty close to the same way you use you're iPod. Simply plug in the iPod cable and throw the iPod in your glove box, center console, under the shifter console, wherever. The D3 charges the iPod and serves as a complete controller. I utilize

play lists primarily but you can also search by artist, album, genre, the works. You can playback iPod video on the D3 but you have to actually select the video on the iPod itself. When in video iPod mode you control the iPod directly. I've also found this is great to let the passenger hold the iPod and select whatever songs they want. The only drawback to the iPod interface is that when you're scrolling thru a list the items don't show up until you stop scrolling. This is a pain on long lists because you have to stop frequently to see where you're at on the list. D3's iPod Interface [CLICK HERE](#) to see the radio tuner, Sirius controller, and video interfaces...{mospagebreak title=Radio, Sirius and Video}OPEN AIR RADIO INTERFACE:This is pretty straight forward. You can program up to 18 memory slots and it displays the frequency in the memory buttons which is nice. This unit does NOT display RDS info which is silly to me that it wouldn't, but no Pioneer radios do that I've found. It's not a huge deal because I spent 99% of my time on Sirius radio or listening to the iPod, but I wanted to mention it. Radio Interface SIRIUS SATELLITE RADIO INTERFACE:Here is my primary and almost only complaint about the Avic-D3, and all Pioneer satellite ready head units for that matter. Pioneer has of late used the SIR-PNR2 Sirius radio tuner and bus interface unit. The big drawback to this is that unlike the iPod, and CD interfaces which show artist, song, and album at the same time, the SIR-PNR2 only displayed one line of scrolling data at a time. You could hit "Info" and step thru all of the information but it didn't show you on the same screen at the same time. About the time I decided on this unit Pioneer released the CD-SB10 Sirius bus interface which is used in conjunction with the Sirius SC-C1 Direct Connect universal receiver, or any Sirius Direct Connect tuner for that matter. It was brand new with no information available but I thought certainly they had to have addressed the main drawback to the SIR-PNR2 right? WRONG! It's the exact same situation. You can save favorite songs with the "memo" feature and the unit will alert you when that song is on any station, so that is relatively cool. You can also use the "Game Alert" feature to alert you when your favorite team(s) are on the air. Which is also a cool feature. All of that said, I am still quite bitter that they didn't fix the lack of a multi-line Sirius display.I plan to rectify this myself once the Sirius and XM merger is complete. The XM interface for the Pioneer is excellent. It lists all information on the main screen and the favorite buttons show the station as well, including logos (which this does not for Sirius). So once the merger is complete and XM starts broadcasting the NFL and NASCAR channels I will pick up an XM receiver and be in hog heaven. In the picture below I intentionally chose a picture where the text was scrolling to show you the thing that annoys me. Sirius Interface. Pretty, But Not Very Functional DVD VIDEO PLAYBACK:This is about as straight forward as it gets. The D3 is 100% a fully functional DVD player. It allows you to switch chapter to chapter, display closed captioning, zoom, change the angle (if supported on the disc), the works really. I do not use this feature other than to show it off really, but it has a nice picture and the screen to my surprise isn't too small to enjoy the film. The wireless control does an excellent job controlling the video playback. The remote controls basic functions on the audio screens, but shines on the video portion. DVD Playback (Sorry for the so-so Picture) [CLICK HERE](#) to see the comments on the Bluetooth speakerphone, steering wheel audio controls, and my final thoughts and pictures!{mospagebreak title=Bluetooth and Conclusion}BLUETOOTH SPEAKERPHONE:The majority of reviews I read on the CD-BTB200 complained of compatibility with their phones. I can say that I not only didn't have that problem, but was blown away with how great the unit worked. I have two phones. A Verizon Wireless Blackberry (7130e) for work and a Sprint Samsung Katana as my personal phone. I initiated the first sync from the handset with the D3 in "open" mode with both phones and both mated perfectly. I was able to transfer my phonebook to the D3 with the Samsung (didn't try with the Blackberry because they're all work contacts) and they both auto-sync flawlessly every time. The sound quality is nice considering it is a speakerphone and I do not hear any echo at all. I can honestly say that this product performed exactly as expected. I apologize for not having pictures of the bluetooth interface but trust me when I say it's straight forward and quite simple.Here is where I have placed my bluetooth microphone. There was room to slide the mount under the lip at the front edge of the steering column. In this location I've not experienced any road noise or spotty pick up problems. It looks larger in this picture than in person. It doesn't block any gauges and is very non-intrusive.Bluetooth Microphone Location STEERING WHEEL CONTROLS:I installed the PAC SWI-PS steering wheel controller as I couldn't bear the thought of giving up my controls just because I switched head units. Installation was relatively simple. I simply had to tap pin 18 of the factory radio harness with the PAC's white wire, and tap pin 19 of the factory radio harness to a ground. Programming was pretty straight forward and the unit simply works. The headaches I expected in installing this product never materialized. I don't notice intermittent control, didn't have to install a resistor to make it work, it simply worked as designed. FINAL THOUGHTS....I can honestly say I'm generally pleased with the Avic-D3 and associated accessories I installed along with it. This unit is not perfect as I indicated above, but it does everything advertised pretty well and even managed to surprise me on several fronts. The bottom line is that for the Avic-D3, Bluetooth module, iPod interface cable, wireless remote controll, Sirius receiver, Sirius bus adapter, steering wheel audio controller, mounting kit and wiring harness I paid a grand total of \$981 to the door. That's a lot of gear for under \$1000. I dare say that there isn't another unit out there where you can purchase everything I did and be less out of pocket than \$1300-\$1500 and in most cases A LOT more than that.I'm not going to waste any more of your time with a Pro/Con list as if you read this review you already know what I like/dislike about the unit. I can honestly say I would recommend this unit to anyone looking for a complete solution at a relatively reasonable price. \$1000 is a lot of money, there's no way around that. But for under \$1000 you get a lot of radio, a lot of features, and a lot of convenience. That's not mentioning the "bling" factor or that the factory nav unit is a \$2000+ feature and doesn't do nearly the long list of things this does. There are a lot of GREAT head units out there, some better some worse. At the end of the day I decided on this D3 because of price, that it had a volume knob (odd desire I know), and the color scheme can change to match my interior. What you decide on is up to you and your budget, but I don't think anyone would have regrets with the Avic-D3 by Pioneer.If anyone has questions or comments about this review/tutorial feel free to drop me a line by [CLICKING HERE](#). (Sorry for the form but the internet ad crawlers will blow up my inbox otherwise!) That's all I have. I've included a few additional photos below of the installed unit for your viewing pleasure. The top picture shows the mounting kits flush fit with the dash after adding the 3 washer shims I mentioned previously... THANKS FOR READING!