

# PIONEER DEH-P6900UB

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**O** was in Vancouver, BC a few weeks ago, and had lunch with a few of the guys from Pioneer Canada. I mentioned to them that I had one of their new USB-equipped decks on the bench ready for a test drive. After a quick run-through of the deck's features and capabilities, I was anxious to check it out. So, without further delay, let's dive into the Pioneer DEH-P6900UB.

## FEATURES

The DEH-P6900UB is in the upper range of the vast array of Pioneer source units. It's a single-DIN AM / FM CD Receiver with a detachable control panel. The main focus of the UB is that it features a USB connection on the rear of the deck – more on that later.

The key cosmetic focus on the deck is the blue OEL (Organic Electro-Luminescent) dot matrix display and the large rotary control. The OEL display has a resolution of 160 x 48 pixels and can display up to three lines of text, each with an impressive 16 characters per line. That's twice what most competing products offer. Pioneer calls the control the Rotary Commander. This multi-function control allows

you to access most of the deck's features and functions. The Rotary Commander is called the Multi-Control in the owner's manual, just in case you are looking for it. This large control is a volume knob, joystick and push button all in one. Turn it, press it or rock it up, down, left or right. These capabilities let you navigate and adjust everything on the 6900UB.

Next on the massive list of features is the USB connection. Pioneer calls this uBus, and it allows USB devices such as an iPod, a portable media player or a USB storage device to be accessed to play music. The DEH-P6900UB USB connection is a female USB A-type connection on a 20cm-long pigtail hanging off the back of the deck. Pioneer does include a long extension cable to make connecting a portable device easy. The USB port meets the USB 2.0 criteria and the maximum storage device capacity is 250GB – freakin' huge. Fat 12, Fat 16 and Fat 32 formats are supported, and the deck will play back MP3 and non-DRM enabled WMA and iTunes AAC files. It will also play WAV files if you want some serious sound quality – that's a nice touch. There was a yellow insert in the owner's manual that specified that only Mass >>

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## SPEAKER BOXX DEH-P6900UB SPECS

- CD-R/RW READY
- MP3, WMA, WAV, ITUNES AAC
- BAX DIGITAL ENHANCEMENT
- XM / SIRIUS RADIO READY
- BUILT-IN USB CONTROL
- 18 FM/6 AM PRESETS
- IPOD CONTROL CAPABILITY (VIA OPTIONAL CD-IU50)
- AUXILIARY INPUT (VIA OPTIONAL CD-RB10 OR CD-RB20)
- SUBWOOFER VOLUME CONTROL
- 50W X 4 BUILT-IN MOSFET AMPLIFIER
- FLIP-DOWN CONTROL PANEL
- 10-KEY CARD REMOTE CONTROL INCLUDED
- 160- X 48-PIXEL BLUE ORGANIC EL (OEL) DISPLAY
- BLUETOOTH INTERFACE READY (OPTIONAL CD-BTB200)

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Storage Class USB devices will work. The note also states that iPod functionality depends on the iPod specifications – so we'll have to check that out on the bench.

Compressed digital audio support is maximized with ID3 Tag display and AAC / WMA text display, so you will know the artist, title and album information while you are enjoying your music collection. Of course, these files can be played from the USB port or from a burnt CD.

Bluetooth is the buzzword of the past few years and the 6900UB doesn't get left behind. Add the optional CD-BTB100 and you can link up with a compatible cellular phone to make or answer a phone call.

The 6900UB is far from done laying its cards on the table. It is of course Sat radio ready, being able to control an optional Sirius or XM satellite radio tuner. A TV tuner, CD changer and a DVD or Multi-DVD player are additional options.

Digging through the owner's manual reveals a few subtle features that are worth mentioning. In the CD playback menu, Pioneer includes an option that offers control over compression and the Pioneer BMX. Bit Media eXpander is Pioneer's audio-processing software designed to help restore sound quality to compressed media files.



The DEH-P6900UB is well appointed when it comes to conventional audio adjustments as well. Of course, the deck features a conventional balance and fader control to start. Up next in the menu structure is equalization. The 6900UB offers Powerful, Natural, Vocal, Custom1, Custom2, Flat and S.Bass preset curves. You can also go in and adjust the equalizer curves manually. Frequency centers are at 50, 125, 315, 800, 2k, 5k and 12.5kHz and you can boost by up to 12dB in 2dB steps. Next are the subwoofer output controls. You can

set the crossover frequency at 50, 63, 80, 100 or 125Hz and the slope is specified as being -18dB / octave. The subwoofer output level is also adjustable, from +6dB to -24dB and subwoofer polarity can be normal or reversed. You can set the rear channel preamp output to be full range or subwoofer. Interestingly, you can set the rear power output channels of the deck to the same options – subwoofer or full range. Pioneer claims (and they are technically correct) that you can drive your subwoofer directly with the powered output of the rear channels. Just don't expect to break any SPL records with it.

That OEL display is quite configurable. The 6900UB features all sorts of different screen effects – call them wallpapers if you will. Two different background visuals, four background pictures, a level meter, three visualizers, two spectrum analyzers, a movie or an entertainment clock. If you are like me, you can turn off all the motion for a simple static display with the Ent. OFF 1 mode. There are also adjustments for dimmer, brightness and even a reverse mode, so the 6900UB is always going to look good. ▶▶



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**BLUETOOTH IS THE BUZZWORD OF THE PAST FEW YEARS AND THE 6900UB DOESN'T GET LEFT BEHIND. ADD THE OPTIONAL CD-BTB100 AND YOU CAN LINK UP WITH A COMPATIBLE CELLULAR PHONE TO // MAKE OR ANSWER A PHONE CALL...**



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## TESTING

I set the 6900UB up on my test bench for a run through the measurement gauntlet. Up first was power output. The owner's manual provides one of the weirdest power specifications I have seen in a while. Pioneer claims 22W x 4 (50Hz to 15kHz) at 5% distortion. While in a real-world application this is a totally valid number, it surely doesn't equate to the CEA-2006 spec we use as a reference. With all four channels connected to my bank of 4Ω load resistors, I measured 8.63V per channel, or 18.61Wrms, which represents a rock solid performance with all channels driven. Next was output voltage. The Pioneer clan claim 4V with an output impedance of 100Ω. I measured 3.90V at full volume with a 1kHz,

0dB sine wave. Bumping the 2kHz eq band up a notch increased the output, and I was able to measure 3.99V (call it 4V) just as clipping was setting in on the top of the waveform. Output impedance was excellent, measuring a very low 55Ω – that is a specification to be very proud of. Finally, I loaded up the Pierre Verany Digital Test CD to evaluate error-tracking capabilities. The DEH-P6900UB came in on the low end of the scale, only being capable of playing 31 without errors. This represents the ability to track through 1.0mm errors – a little on the low side, but still in the acceptable range.

I found it took some getting used to the Rotary Commander. The button doesn't stick out very far, but it is covered in rubber around the edges to make gripping easier. There was lots of pushing, turning and tilting required to

get through some of the menus, and though the layout is very logical and intuitive, many menus would be easier to access with some dedicated buttons. It all boils down to personal preference though.

Time to check out the aforementioned iPod situation. I plugged in my 30GB fifth-generation iPod video to start the test. After a second, the iPod displayed the Pioneer logo on the screen, and the track I had been listening to last started playing. You can sort your music by album, artist, song or playlist just to name a few. With the test of the new iPod complete, I plugged in my old third-gen 20GB iPod. The 6900UB didn't find it, even though the iPod was running the latest 3.1.1 software revision. This is a common occurrence for source units that connect to an iPod via USB.



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## CONCLUSION

The cosmetic theme of the DEH-P6900UB is decidedly high-tech and, provided you like blue, should be a hit with anyone wanting to add some tech bling to their ride. I had a hard time reading the buttons on the left when the deck was on my bench, but once I got used to their functionality, all was well.

The DEH-P6900UB is a well-equipped head unit. Pioneer doesn't have a lot of USB-equipped decks in its product line (the only other is in the Premier series), so this one is destined to be very popular. It has absolutely all the features required to be the heart of a massive audio system and it checks out well on the bench in terms of measurements. Odds are good Pioneer is going to sell a lot of these this year! **PAS**

**Pioneer**

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