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# Hi-Fi News

**IMMERSION**  
Various Artists/Composers  
Starkland S-2010  
65m 46s  
DVD-A 4.0/5.1 24/96 & AC3 5.1

One of the principal criticisms of new high-resolution formats is the horror that can be surround-sound. But there are reasons why surround might be a good idea. One is to capture the acoustic signature of the recording venue, such that reverberation and echo artefacts are replayed behind your head, to approximate the original experience of 'being there'. The other justification is to complement the creativity of the artist or composer, bringing music forward of the stereo domain. *Immersion* is one of the finest arguments I've heard for the latter idea.

It is an anthology of new music from modern composers of the more avant-garde persuasion, or as its label Starkland describes it, 'alternative classical music'. Where many new surround recordings sound contrived or simply ham-fisted in their soundfield steering, *Immersion* shows how some imaginative thought,

coupled with occasional sonic outrages, can enhance the performance. The surround effects are rarely subtle, but you get the sense that the various artists recorded here are no strangers to quadrophonic sound and its open-ended possibilities. Six of the 13 composers opted for a 5-channel mix using a centre speaker, and seven of them exploit LFE effects in the .1 channel.

The result is a pot pourri of electroacoustic compositions made with everyday object, samples, synthesizers, huge natural reverbs or treated acoustic instruments. Challenging but rarely either cacaphonic or overlush new-age, *Immersion* invites repeated listening. Sound quality throughout is excellent too, with incredible air and spatial depth (depending on track), and no watermark to sully sound. This is one of the few DVD-A albums to date which sounds better than CD. Much better. **AH A\*:1** ▼

Adventures  
in surround  
sound

**A** = highest Sound Quality rating  
**1** = highest Performance rating  
"A 'star' denotes outstanding quality."



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