

International



Issue 2/2025 · 5,90 €

ANALOG HIFI AND VINYL CULTURE



READ IT !



Now available



International



GOODBYE MUNICH

Immediately after finishing this article, I will be heading to Munich for the last High End show. For 21 years, the show at the MOC exhibition center has shaped the high-end scene like no other, and no one seriously disputes its reputation as the leading trade fair for the industry worldwide. For me, leaving the Bavarian capital is a rather melancholic experience: I have a wealth of memories connected with the 21 events held here, and yes – I attended every single one.

It starts with various presentations over the years that were extremely impressive in both a positive and negative sense, but the icing on the cake are the little things that you have grown to love over the years. Starting with the restaurant at the neighboring sports club, which over the years has become an absolute insider tip for visitors and exhibitors who have been battered by the quality and cost of the trade fair cate-

ring. Or the huge DIY store, which is just within walking distance and has made it possible for a large number of exhibition booths to be built in the first place. As the trade fair has grown in size, the “Motorworld” opposite has become an extremely exciting exhibition space in recent years. All these things will be relevant for the last time in the next few days, which makes me a little sad.

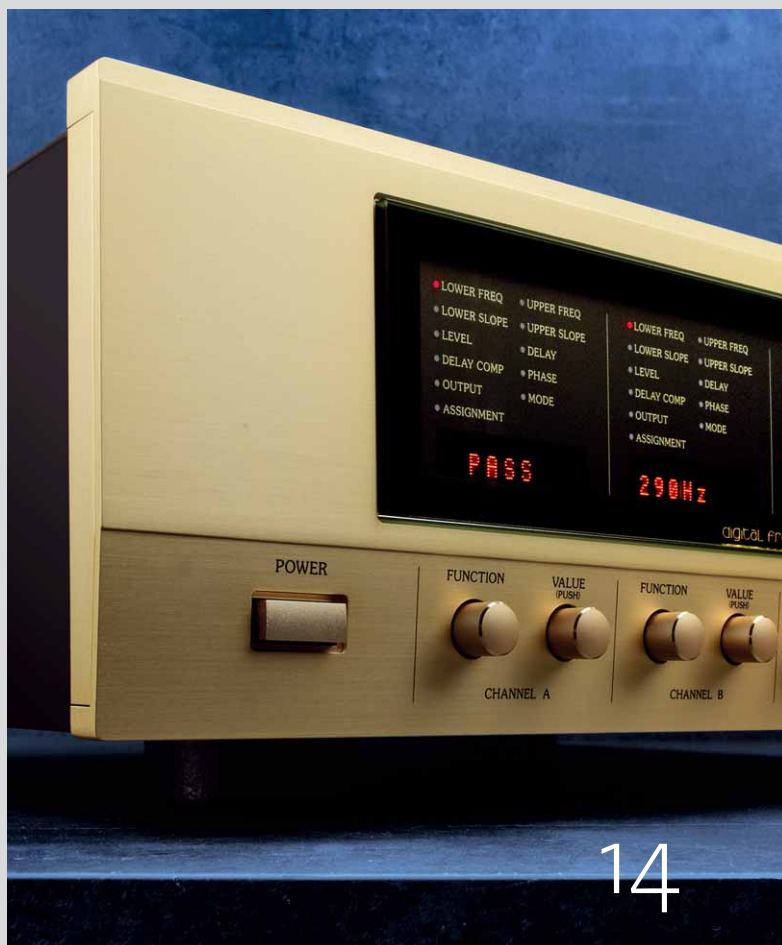
Next year, the cards will be completely reshuffled and no one really knows how the new venue in Vienna will work. Sure, the conditions look good, but it will take years to create a functioning all-round logistics system.

Holger Barske, Editor in Chief





6



14



22



30

38

- 6 Tube power amplifier Air Tight ATM-1E
Arriving
- 14 Active switch Accuphase DF-75
Digital technology in a nutshell
- 22 Power amplifier Eversolo AMP-F10
Time to wrap up warm
- 30 Loudspeaker Martion Aeonor
Dances with the funnel
- 38 Loudspeaker Epos ES-28N
Simply Spot-On
- 44 Phono preamp Thivan Labs P20
Can they still do it?
- 52 Integrated amplifier Vitus Audio RI-101 MK.II
For beginners of a special kind

Categories

- 3 Editorial
- 6 Magazine
- 60 Preview / Imprint

44

52

ARRIVING

The history of Air Tight began almost 40 years ago with the ATM-1 power amplifier. And even though company boss Yutaka “Jack” Miura emphasizes that the ATM-1E has nothing to do with the ATM-1, we can still admire a tradition here.







A thoroughly familiar look, even if a few things have changed visually: the choke at the front and the bias meter are new

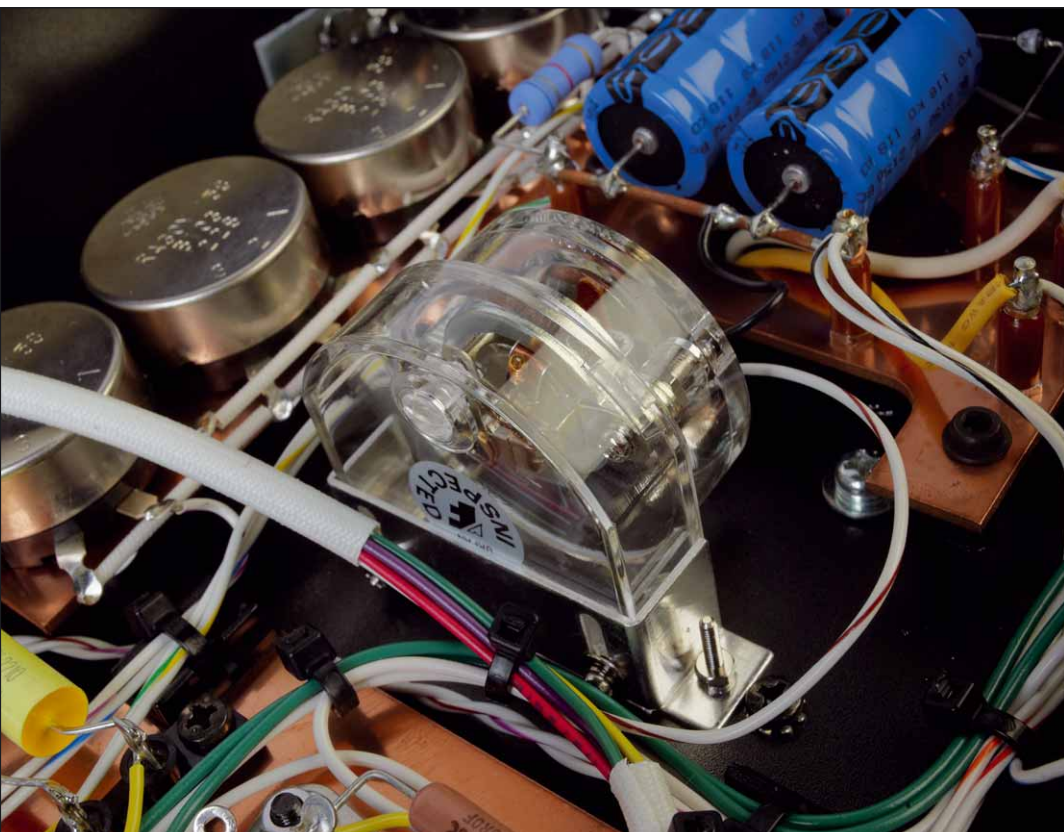
Tradition and modernity

Whenever possible, Jack Miura emphatically stresses that the ATM-1E is a completely newly developed power amplifier and not a variant of the ATM-1S or even the original ATM-1, which still used tube rectifiers. This is true, as the ATM-1E uses a new input and driver stage and new output transformers. Nevertheless, the ATM-1E remains a compact push-pull power amplifier with EL-34 pentodes, whose wiring options are, in short, limited. What Miura wants to make clear is obvious, of course, but I need to elaborate a little. After the co-founder and technical mastermind of Air Tight, Masami Ishiguro, passed away in 2014, Jack's father Atsushi Miura, who conceived the infinitely finely tuned Air Tight portfolio, continued to serve as a consultant for a while. Ultimately, however, the entire line, with the exception of the ATC-3

line preamplifier, has been redesigned since 2015 by Yoshihiro Hayashiguchi as product designer and Kiyoshi Hamada as technical developer. In the process, both the quality and the prices have changed significantly in some cases. In principle, the quality of the devices has certainly not deteriorated, but they have changed.

Air Tight then and now

For many years, I was a notorious equipment swapper, trying out lots of different things and then selling them again. I now own half a dozen Air Tight devices and that's it for me. None of them are ATM-1 or ATM-1S, nor are they devices from the new Air Tight era, but I do have the AMT-4, which is also a push-pull power amplifier with 6L6 tubes. I also have an ATC-1HQ preamplifier, which was originally designed for use with the ATM-1. So I'm



First look at the circuit. In the background, we can see the potentiometers for the bias adjustment

Teammates

Preamplifier:

- Air Tight ATC-1 HQ

Phono preamp:

- Air Tight ATE 2005

Turntable:

- PTP Audio Solid 9 Stadshoud
mit Schröder Nr. 2 SO

Pickup Cardridge:

- Lyra Delos

Loudspeaker:

- Rogers LS3/5a
- Boenicke W5SE
- Greenwall Ivy

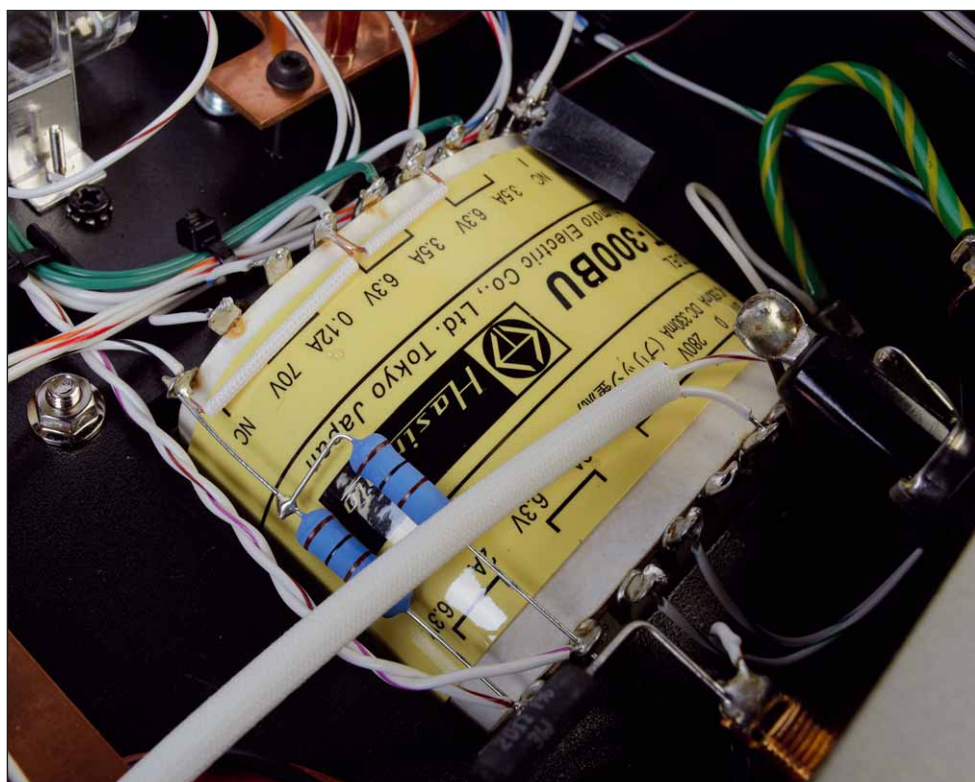
Competitors

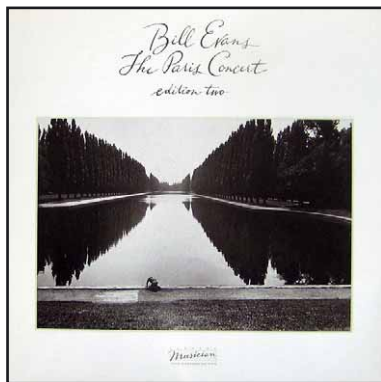
Power amplifier:

- Air Tight ATM-4

Oh, there is a Hashimoto transformer after all – but only the power transformer is from better days

in a good position to evaluate the ATM-1E. As mentioned, it works as expected from its predecessors, with one pair of EL34 pentodes per channel and diode rectification. The input configuration has been changed from one EEC83 and two ECC82 to one ECC81 (voltage amplification) and two 6CG7 (driver stage and phase splitter). Air Tight has been using the 81 for some time because of its lower gain factor. This is certainly due to the different digital sources with their high output voltage. For fans of NOS tubes, it is much more difficult to find a really good 81 than a suitable 83, but that is of course no longer an issue for Air Tight, thanks to RoHS. This is not an issue with the 6CG7, which can be found in the most classic EL-34 power amplifier ever, the Marantz 8B; even the EH types are decent. The ATM-1 was the first power amplifier in the Japanese company's range





What we played

Leos Janacek

Das Klavierwerk

Horace Parlan

Blue Parlan

Miles Davis

E.S.P.

Bill Evans

The Paris Concert edition two

Tom Petty

Wild Flowers and all the Rest

in 1986 and was still available 20 years later in its second incarnation as the ATM-1S. The decisive impetus for the redesign of the power amplifier was ultimately the delivery and quality problems with the previous supplier of the output transformers, Hashimoto. After looking into this for a while, the company tackled the issue between 2021 and 2024 and turned everything upside down. Air Tight had always switched between Hashimoto and Tamura for its various devices, but now they are going with Tamura. Surprisingly, they seem to be content with transformers from their catalog, whereas in the past they had more specialized versions wound. Air Tight has the power transformer wound by a specialist company, as with the ATM 300R, unless it comes from Hashimoto, as is the case with our test unit.

Further circuit details are not disclosed. A glance at the transformer suggests that it is an ultra-linear circuit, but that is speculation. The power amplifier produces 35 watts, exactly the same power as the Marantz 8B once did.

New times

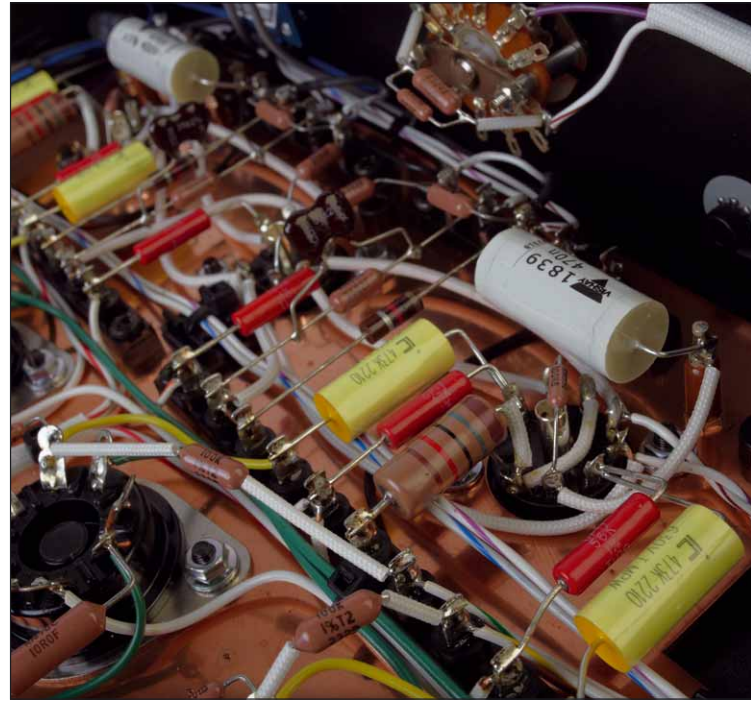
The ATM-1E has been adapted to the new Air Tight device line, which is completely understandable. They quite understandably believe that general listening tastes have changed and that modern speakers can now also be driven with this type of power amplifier. I admit that I mourn the old tuning by Atsushi Miura and Masami Ishiguro, because in my opinion they achieved the perfect blend of neutrality and warmth. The new devices are a little less forgiving, perhaps a little more on the transistor side. But please don't get me wrong, because basically the ATM-1E is a more than "proper" power amplifier, especially when compared to its competitors. The idea that the devices are now becoming more universal is also correct. Even with the ATM-300R, I was surprised by the relatively high amount of negative feedback, which initially gave me pause in terms of sound quality. Ultimately, however, this solution seemed just right to me, even though it is rather unusual for a single-ended triode power amplifier. In the case of a push-pull power amplifier,

*No nonsense on the back.
Nicely, the power phase is marked*





The new bias meter is located to the left of the choke. The small screws are used to adjust the bias of the output tubes



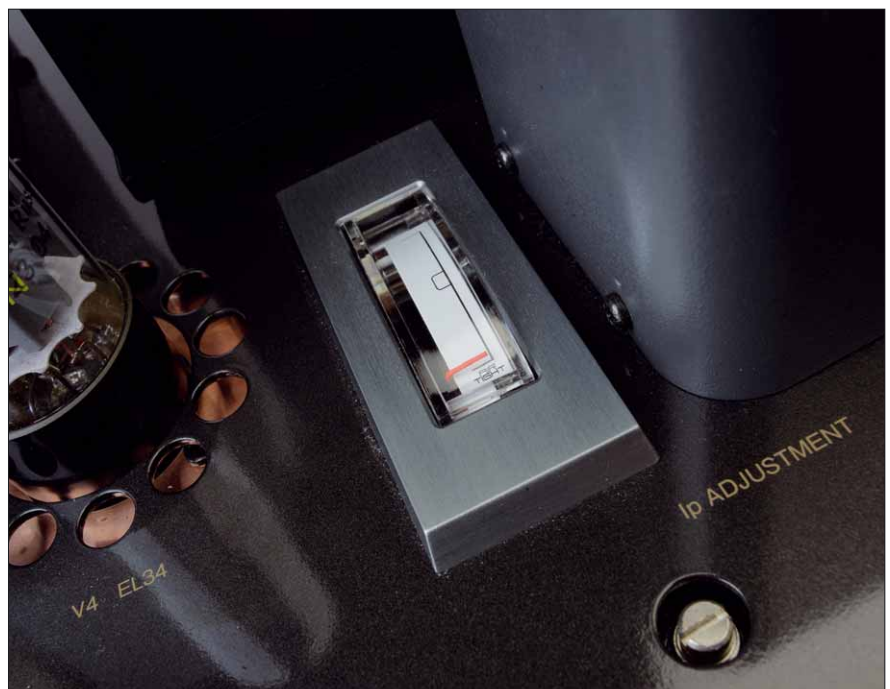
A look at the actual, freely wired circuit, which is mounted on a copper plate: fine, selected components

feedback is to be expected anyway. Among other things, this should make the ATM-1E more stable at critical loads, which makes it attractive for a larger number of speakers, and this is a feature that should not be denied to Air Tight's best-selling device to date.

Sound quality

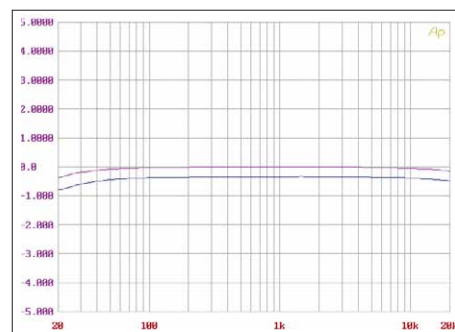
At first, the ATM-1E sounded closed and reserved, the complete opposite of what I expected. However, this disappeared after a few days of playing in, and the power amplifier seemed practically new to me. Soon, the sound became more precise and smoother, making it a pleasure to listen to. Since it is a Class A/B circuit, the device does not get nearly as hot as the AMT 300R, for example. I am listening to one of Bill Evans' last concerts with tremendous presence, crazy attack, and refined fine and coarse

Here's a clearer view of the point you should aim for when adjusting. Even beginners can do it



dynamics—just as it should be for a really good EL-34 power amplifier. I literally hate reading about so-called stage widths. I can understand when the sound seems “compressed,” two-dimensional instead of three-dimensional. But since practically none of us were at the concert and few of us know the concert halls or clubs, I consider all statements about the supposed authentic stage width or depth to be utter nonsense. I can only get a live feeling, a sense of authenticity, with my equipment in the room where I listen to certain components, or I can’t. Here: Oh yes. Anyone who has ever heard a piano, or better still a grand piano, live would agree with me if they were sitting next to me now: this is how a grand piano can sound – they don’t all sound the same. So hard and soft, depending on the dynamics of the touch. Because hard touches must sound hard, and soft, delicate ones must sound soft. Bill Evans was in outstanding form less than ten months before his death. He had found a trio again, just like at the begin-

Only a few manufacturers still build their tube amplifiers like this, and in our opinion, that’s how they should be built



Measurements

Lab commentary

Everything is fine in the measurement lab: The Air Tight achieves things like a broad-band and linear frequency response with flying colors, and the channel deviation of about one-third decibel is to be expected with the tube concept. The signal-to-noise ratio at one watt and one kilohertz is 75.6 decibels (A) at eight ohms, and the channel separation is 73.3 decibels (A). At 0.02 percent, the THD is impressively low for such a design, and even at four ohms, the picture remains virtually unchanged. In both cases, the device delivers almost exactly 30 watts per channel and consumes 135 watts of power when idle.

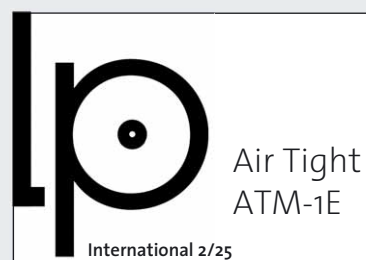
ning of his career, and seemed to want to savor it a little before he left this earth. And that’s exactly what I capture perfectly with the ATM-1E. Or the bass of Marc Johnson, whom Evans loved like a son – he had a limited relationship with his own son: there is a person standing on stage, playing the strings of his wooden instrument: you can hear that. And that’s all I need to know.

Christian Bayer

Air Tight ATM-1E



• Price	12,000 Euro
• Distribution	Axxis Europe, Hofheim/Ts
• Internet	www.axxis-europe.de
• Warranty	2 years
• Dimensions (W x H x D)	365 x 305 x 255 mm
• Weight	approx. 21.5 kg

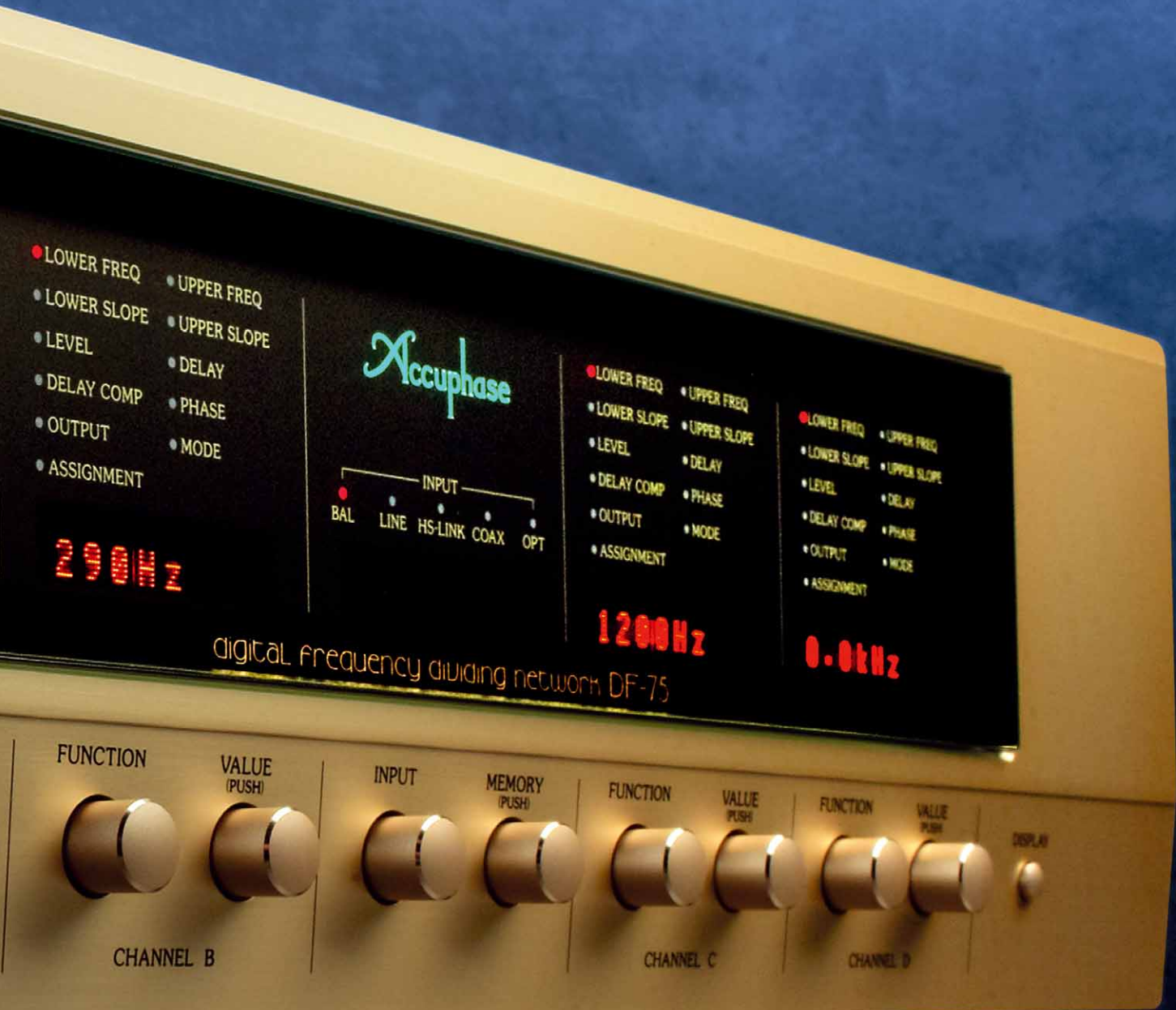


» If I were looking for a tube power amplifier to end my search, the ATM-1E would be my first choice. It sounds excellent and, as always, looks very attractive.



DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY IN A NUTSHELL

This may well be the most extreme device I have ever had the pleasure of testing. It is so special that it does not even appear on the distributor's website.





The device can be operated entirely via the knobs on the front panel

Just so we're on the same page: multi-way speakers can be implemented in two ways. In the classic passive version, a network of coils, capacitors, and resistors distributes the music signal supplied by the amplifier to the speaker's woofer, midrange, and tweeter. In an active design, each speaker chassis has its own amplifier, and filtering takes place at the small signal level before the power amplifiers. With the advent of digital signal processors (DSP), it became possible to filter in a much more complex and sophisticated manner and to implement things such as linear time de-

lays between the individual branches without any problems. The individual drivers benefit noticeably from being connected directly to an output stage, because they are then electrically damped across the entire audio frequency range and not just within their transmission range. Compact active speaker concepts are common in many areas of consumer electronics and are available for surprisingly little money, but in the high-end segment, things are still a bit difficult. On the one hand, you have to accept considerable expense (the number of power amplifier channels must

The rear panel offers numerous digital and analog signal connections



equal the number of speaker chassis), and on the other hand, there are hardly any truly high-end digital crossover solutions that will tempt seasoned audiophiles out of their comfort zone.

The DF-75 model is the latest incarnation of a digital active crossover from Accuphase. We probably don't need to say too much about Accuphase as an amplifier manufacturer at this point – you know that I consider the champagne-colored devices from Yokohama to be the crown jewel of audiophile creation. In the world of digital playback devices, the manufacturer's reputation is at least as impeccable, although we are unable to verify this due to a lack of thematic affinity in this publication. In addition to D/A converters, CD and SACD players, however, Accuphase has a small department dedicated to digital-based special devices, namely equalizers and active crossovers. If I'm counting correctly, the DF-75 is the Japanese manufacturer's fifth active crossover and, spoiler alert, a device

like no other in the world. It offers all the benefits of digital signal processing, but can be operated entirely "analog" on the device and requires no computer.

Thanks to its enormous range of functions, it can easily be made the heart of an active four-way system, enabling things that would not be possible with passive means. For example, speaker arrangements with very long horns, which require significant time alignment to achieve homogeneous dispersion.

This is no problem with the DF-75, but it requires in-depth knowledge of speaker development and the appropriate measurement technology, which is why we don't want to go into too much detail here. What we want to do here is activate an existing passive speaker, as this requires considerably less effort. It's fortunate that many years ago I built a replica of one of the great American studio monitors, the JBL 4355. My two units have external crossovers, which gives me easy access to the

Teammates

Turntable:

- TechDAS Air Force III / Reed 3p / Reed 1x

Pickup Cartridge:

- DS Audio DS-E3 / DS-003

Phono preamp:

- DIY Röhrententzerrer

Preamplifier:

- NEM PRA-5

Power amplifier:

- 2x Yamaha P-2200
- Thivan Labs 811 Anniversary
- EL12 SE nach BTB

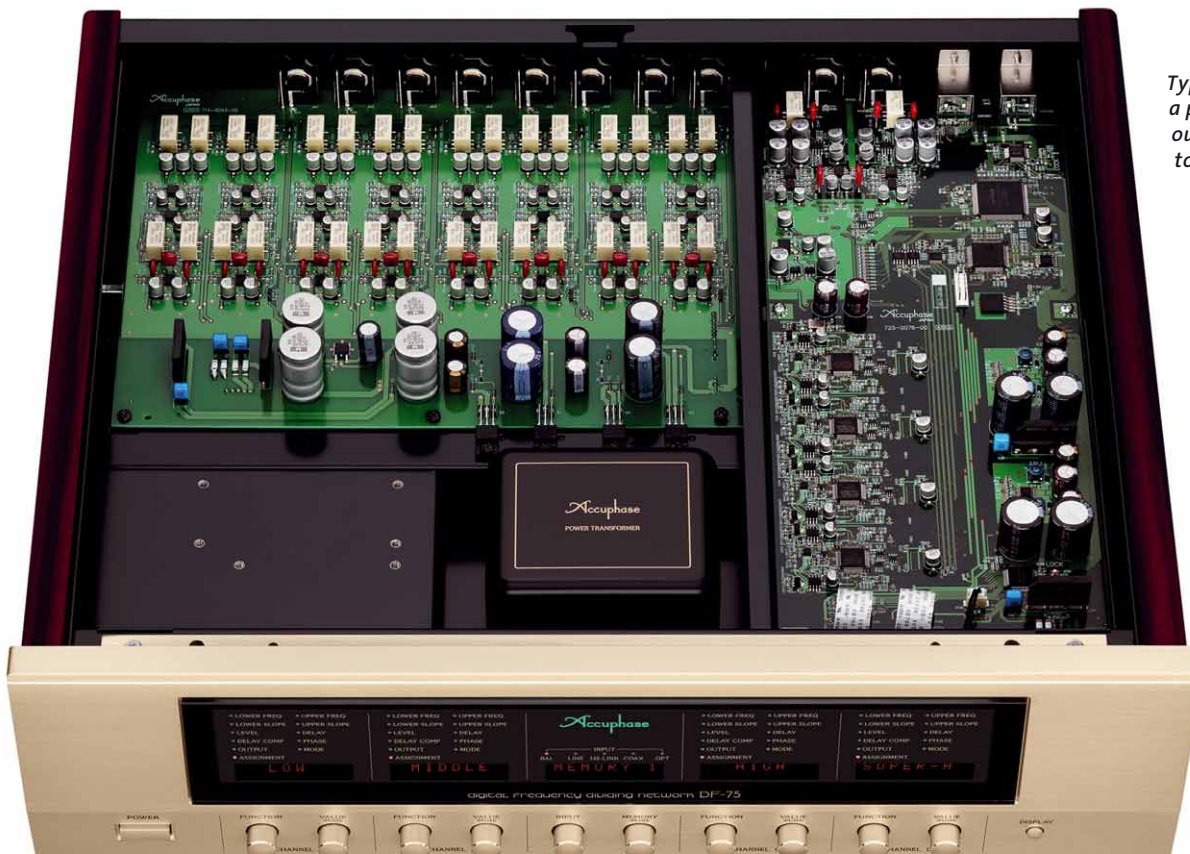
Loudspeaker:

- JBL 4355

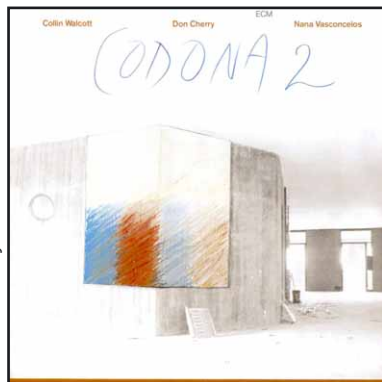
Competitors

Active switch:

- JBL 5325



Typical Accuphase: a perfectly thought-out design down to the last detail



What we played

Walcott / Cherry / Vasconcelos

Codona 2

Truckfighters

Mania

Hannes Wader

7 Lieder

Tool

Fear Innoculum

driver connections themselves – essential for activation, as this is where the power amplifiers have to be connected. If you are interested in doing this with your speakers, you should be aware that it is hardly possible without a few “structural” changes to the speakers. Of course, you can route the connections of the individual drivers to the outside through the bass reflex tube, for example, but this is not very elegant.

My JBL is a four-way system with two 15” woofers, a 12” midrange driver, a 2” compression tweeter, and a slot radiator for the super-high frequency range. The standard passive crossover is well documented, and all crossover frequencies and filter slopes are known. These are the best possible conditions for active operation. If you find yourself in a similar situation with your speakers, then the following explanations may be just what you need.

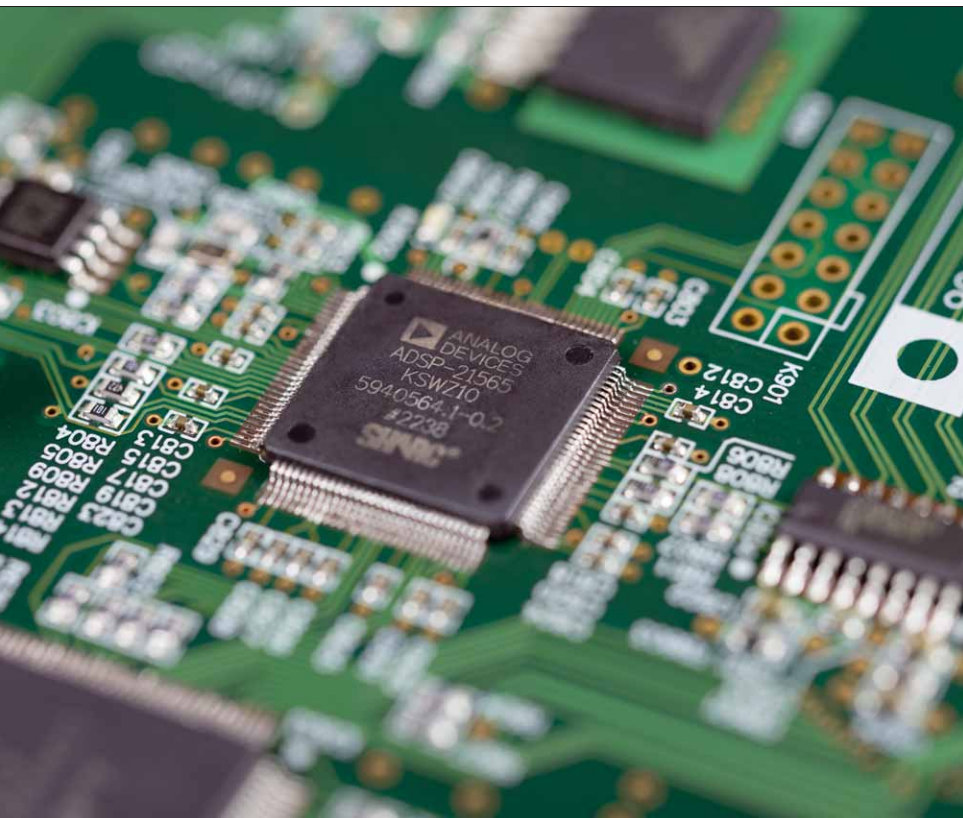
The DF-75 comes in the classic, pleasantly unobtrusive Accuphase design. This includes perfectly polished real wood side panels and a super-fine, black anodized top

panel. It can handle a maximum of four branches per channel in stereo mode, making it a perfect fit here. The user communicates with the device via five control panels, four of which are each responsible for a stereo filter unit, while the central unit is used for data management and selecting the desired inputs. There are two analog (RCA and XLR) and three digital inputs: coaxial, optical, and the proprietary HS link. The latter is particularly interesting in combination with other Accuphase digital devices (players, digital equalizers). The device’s eight output signals are, of course, also available in balanced and unbalanced form.

The whole thing is operated via two small rotary knobs (one of which has a push function), the very pleasant Accuphase-typical red dot matrix displays and various LEDs. This allows you to configure the function of each branch (high-pass, low-pass, band-pass), set the filter slopes (6 to 96 decibels/octave), set the upper and lower cutoff frequencies with impressive accuracy between 10 hertz and 50 kilohertz, set the absolute phase, vary the respective level between +12 and -40 decibels with an accuracy of 0.1 decibels, set a delay time correction in the range of +/- 30 meters(!) with an accuracy of half a centimeter, and select a delay time compensation function. Phew. That’s a lot. If you feel overwhelmed by the possibilities, I can reassure you: I’ve never had a device like this in my hands and had my JBL crossover completely “re-built” within half an hour; the device’s system is largely self-explanatory.

Technology

If you’re worried about a possible deterioration in sound quality due to evil digital signal processing, I can reassure you: the manufacturer has pulled out all the stops to make the conversion and calculation processes as transparent as possible. Analog signals, for example, are received by four parallel A/D converter sections inside a state-of-the-art Asahi Kasei chip (AK 5578) and converted into a 32-bit format with a sampling rate of 176 or 352 kilohertz. The data is “calculated” by an Analog Devices computing genius in 64- or 40-bit floating point format. This floating point



The DSP from Analog Devices is an extremely powerful floating-point arithmetic processor

AEONOR



A sonic experience for true pleasure!

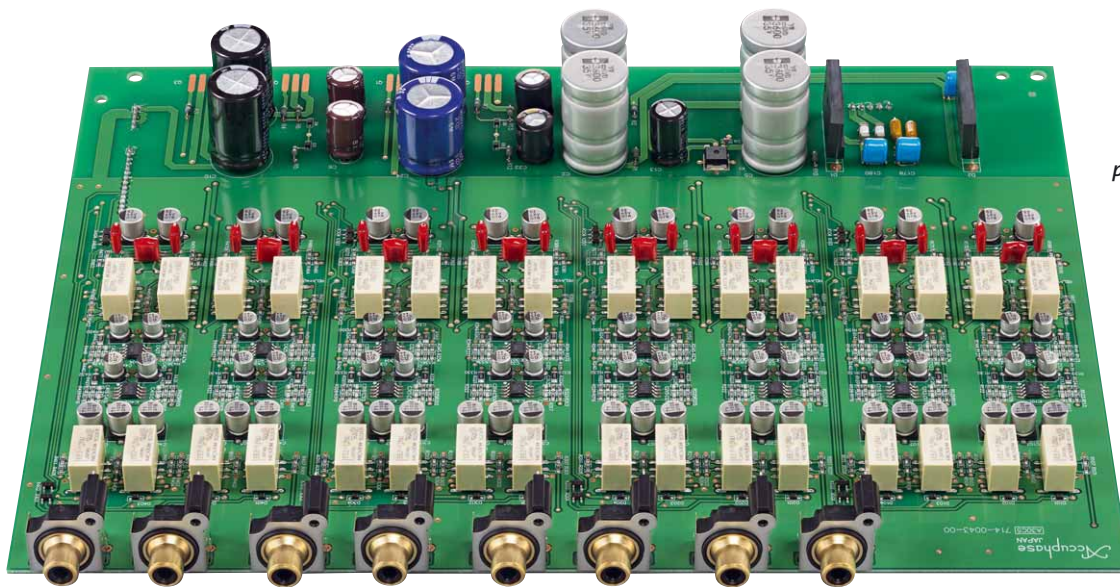
AEONOR, noted for its outstanding performance during its debut around the High End exhibition in 2024 and received „best sound of the show“ by several international journalists.

Needs to be heard to be believed!

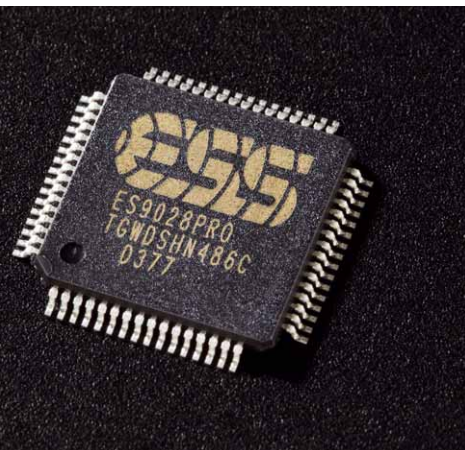
Made to convince true music lovers, even the most exacting audiophiles!

MARTION®

Martion Audiosysteme
info@martion.de www.martion.de



Even with a digital device, the finest analog signal processing is important – here the unbalanced outputs



This D/A converter chip offers eight converter sec

arithmetic ensures almost unlimited accuracy and, above all, that the resolution does not drop significantly even at the lowest signal levels. Accuphase has also gone all out on the D/A converter side: four ESS chips with a total of 32 converter sections provide each output channel with four parallel converter sections. The result is as analog as a signal can be. It goes without saying that the signal routing is completely symmetrical on both the digital and analog sides.

In use

The DF-75 is a hi-fi component like no other. It is a tool with tremendous flexibility that is a true joy to operate. With the activation of my 4355, I have not even begun to scratch the surface of its capabi-

lities, but I can only describe the result of the action as stunning. I have never experienced such interference-free playback in my system, not to mention the pure gain in sound quality: after careful adjustment of the levels of the individual branches, the mid-high range gains a degree of expression and intelligibility that I would never have thought possible. This may also be due to the interesting mix of semiconductor and tube amplifiers for the individual branches, but something like this is only possible with active control.

My dream would definitely be to use this stunning machine to create a horn system that is fully active from the outset. We'll see – the midrange and high-frequency sections are already finished.

Holger Barske

This is where it happens: the converter board also houses the digital signal processor



Accuphase DF-75



- Price
- Distribution
- Phone
- Internet
- Warranty
- Dimensions (W x H x D)
- Weight

13,400 Euro
 PIA HiFi, Weiterstadt
 +49 6150 500255
www.pia-hifi.de
 3 years
 465 x 151 x 396 mm
 approx. 15.1 kg

lp

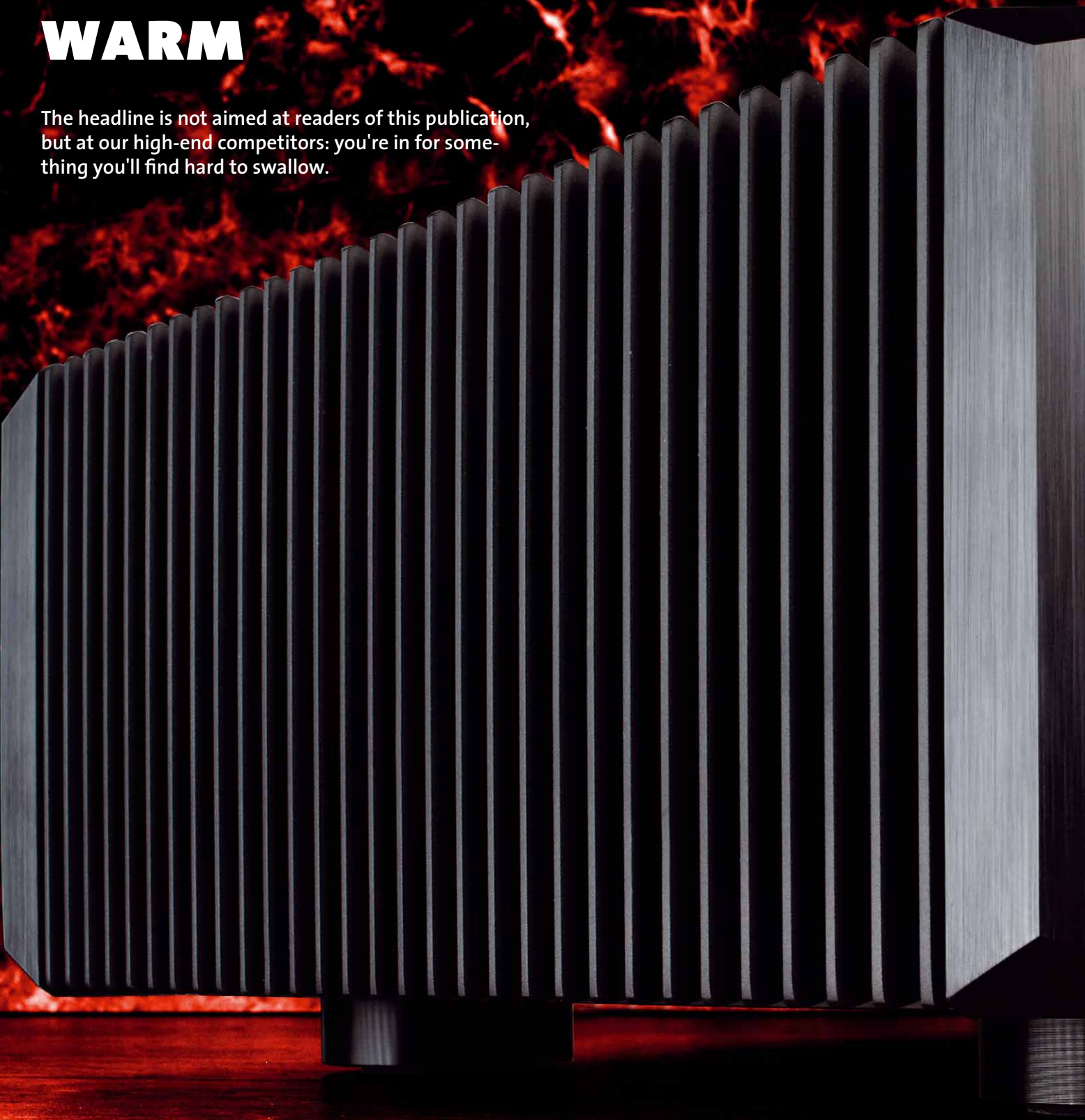
Accuphase DF-75

International 2/25

» The new Accuphase active crossover is pretty much the most impressive device I have ever used. Simply activating an existing speaker concept brings such a profound improvement in reproduction that passive concepts above a certain quality level no longer seem sensible.

TIME TO WRAP UP WARM

The headline is not aimed at readers of this publication, but at our high-end competitors: you're in for something you'll find hard to swallow.







Even in terms of design, the Chinese power amplifier is an absolute hit

Ten MosFets per side ensure reassuring power

Eversolo

So it's finally happened. China has arrived in the high-end audio segment and is teaching the established competition to fear. With the power amplifier under review here, I have for the first time a device on my desk that ticks all the audiophile boxes and is available at an unbeatable price.

The "About Us" page of the company's website reveals that Eversolo "is led by a

team with extensive HiFi industry experience." Interestingly, not a single one of the nine gentlemen pictured there is Chinese. Nevertheless, the company is based in Shenzhen, one of the high-tech centers of the Middle Kingdom.

No one in our circle had ever heard of Eversolo until last year or the year before, when various streamer models appeared and took the market by storm. The exceptionally well-built devices come with a comprehensive feature set and offer everything that modern digital audio fans could want. As analog enthusiasts, we look at such things with half an eye, but leave the intensive study to others.

Until now, that is. Eversolo has now added two stereo power amplifiers to its in-house product range, of which the larger AMP-F10 is clearly the more interesting. And so I stare in amazement at a perfectly crafted, flawless high-end device weighing in at 18 kilograms, offering plenty of power and stability at a list price of Euro 2,580. Naturally, it features a wonderfully playful pair of pointer instruments in the extremely solid metal front panel. With all due respect, I know of nothing comparable that could be purchased even for twice the price. At four times the price, we're slowly getting closer. The AMP-F10 is a very straightforward power amplifier with ample reserves in all important areas. It delivers a stable 180 watts



at eight ohms and a good 300 watts at four ohms. Thanks to its luxuriously equipped output stage (ten thick power transistors per channel), it can be easily driven in bridge mode, delivering over 600 watts at eight ohms and 950 watts at four ohms, according to the manufacturer. That may be only slightly exaggerated, but I haven't tried it out.

The device, which is even sophisticated in terms of design, has largely no visible screws. Fortunately, the heat sinks are not sharp-edged, and everything about the machine seems well thought out.

On the rear panel, there are balanced and unbalanced inputs (selectable via a switch) and a pair of pole terminals for connecting speakers. These, and this is one of the

very few points of criticism, are so cheaply made in China that they seem a little out of place here.

The input sensitivity is switchable, a toggle switch allows you to choose between stereo and mono bridge mode, and there are options for signal-controlled switching, which can also be done via control voltage. The package is complete, plain and simple. The instruments on the front are, of course, more decorative than real measuring devices, but the 340 watts at four ohms as the zero decibel output limit certainly impresses.

The unit is switched on via a standby button on the front, and there is also a "proper" power switch at the rear of the mains input.

Teammates

Turntable:

- **Transrotor Massimo Nero / Studio 12"**

Pickup Cartridge:

- **DS Audio DS-E3**

Phono preamp:

- **DS Audio DS-E3**

Preamplifier:

- **NEM PRA-150**

Loudspeaker:

- **PS Audio Aspen FR10**
- **Klang + Ton Nada**

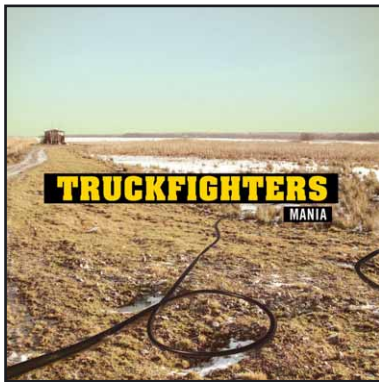
Competitors

Power amplifier:

- **Yamaha P-2200**



*It couldn't be more beautiful:
the Eversolo AMP-F10 from the inside*



What we played

Truckfighters
Mania

Leonard Cohen
You Want It Darker

Chet Baker
Chet

Rickie Lee Jones
Pirates (MFSL 45)

Internal values

Let's take a look inside. But of course. Removing the cover plate proves to be no easy task, but once you've found the small screws stuck in the side of the heat sinks, it's quite simple. And anyone who thought that Eversolo had shot its bolt with the attractive and high-quality exterior and that all that was left was hot air will be sorely disappointed. The design of the device is nothing less than a feast for the eyes and also a real statement in terms of effort. The AMP-F10 could actually be placed alongside an unbeatable device from Japan and it would have nothing to hide – unbelievable at this price. I would bet that Eversolo even paid attention to the color scheme of the components to achieve a harmonious overall look.

At the heart of the action is an impressive toroidal transformer. The transformer, which is wrapped in Mu metal for shielding purposes, is rated at 1000 VA and is pleasantly quiet in operation. This is probably due in part to the fact that Eversolo has built in a DC filter that eliminates any

DC components from the mains supply. The transformer is flanked by two sets of four filter capacitors with impressive capacitance, which means we can consider the issue of power supply satisfactorily resolved. The input board directly on the rear panel houses a shielding metal box in which the input amplification takes place. We don't know exactly what happens in there, as the manufacturer tends to use general terms. However, we can assume that the arrangement is largely symmetrical. From there, and I've never seen this in a hi-fi device before, high-frequency lines with proper plugs and sockets connect to the two power amplifier boards mounted on the sides of the heat sinks. There is another mysterious metal box, which distributes the signals to the two power amplifier branches. These consist of two sets of five MosFets connected in parallel, which leaves a pleasant feeling of reassuring oversizing. In addition, there are protective circuits against all kinds of adversity, so you can sleep soundly in this regard too.



The preamplifier modules are housed in shielded boxes



Signal transport via neatly assembled high-frequency cable – something you don't see very often



Everything you need and a little more: the Eversolo from the rear

Sound

Is the AMP F-10 a distinctly “audiophile” amplifier concept? Not necessarily. It is a generously dimensioned device with a relatively high level of negative feedback and a correspondingly high damping factor.

The distortion level is correspondingly low, and the machine could easily be used for smaller sound reinforcement jobs. That’s why I chose one of my 45-year-old Yamaha P-2200s, which are in the same perfor-



We can't wait to see you
at our booth Atrium 4.1 / E121!

To pay tribute to those wonderful
times and to delight the galaxy,
we have come up with something very
special for our farewell:

**2004 – 2025 = 21 GREAT YEARS HIGH END MUNICH =
21 UNIQUE PAIRS OF “KIM FINAL EDITION HIGH END MUNICH”**

MUNICH, WE MISS YOU ALREADY TO GO TO VIENNA!





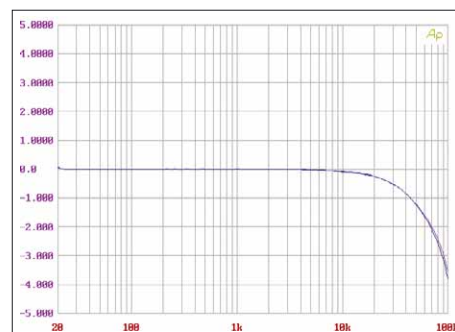
The small switching power supply on the right supplies the circuit components that are active in standby mode



The toroidal transformer is specified with a kilovolt ampere

mance class and are famous representatives of the old “iron pigs,” as a listening test opponent. Of course, they also have pointer instruments, that goes without saying.

The sonic similarity between the two concepts is unmistakable. Both amps are straightforward, unshakeable and agile. The Yamaha sounds a touch more voluminous in the upper bass range than the Eversolo, which follows the path of virtue a little more meticulously in this respect. Both amplifiers are undoubtedly made for speakers that demand the power reserves on offer, i.e. high-efficiency transducers are not the order of the day here. In the publisher’s listening room, I had excellent experiences with the PS Audio Aspen FR10, which sounded rich, robust, and harmonious with both amps. A clear recommendation for people who like it a little rougher. I haven’t had this much fun with Truckfighters, the Swedish desert rock



Measurements

Lab commentary

The Eversolo is also flawless in terms of measurement. The perfectly linear frequency response extends to just below 100 kilohertz. The signal-to-noise ratio at one watt into eight ohms is a clean 90 decibels (A), the channel separation is an excellent 85.6 decibels (A), and the total harmonic distortion is 0.037 percent. At four ohms, the values remain virtually unchanged. The output power is 183 watts at eight ohms and 303 watts at four ohms, which is certainly more than enough. The relatively low power consumption of 85.7 watts when idle indicates that the unit does not consume too much standby power.

band that knows how to get people out of their seats, in a long time. The opener “Last Curfew” already impressively shows where the journey is headed: the AMP-F10 delivers the brutally heavy guitar riffs with tremendous dynamics, peeling the guitar out of the big picture with astonishing clarity (it does this better than the Yamaha) and practically nailing the listener to the back of the sofa. Absolutely magnificent. The late Leonard Cohen is probably the exact opposite of this requirement profile. Here, too, the AMP-F10 delivers a very clean performance with perfectly clear vocals. If you’re looking for delicate, ethereal vocal reproduction, you’ll probably have to save up for an Air Tight amplifier, but the Eversolo does the job in a rather unspectacular and straightforward way, and it certainly doesn’t get it wrong. This is an excellent amplifier for (almost) all situations.

Holger Barske

Eversolo AMP-F10



- Price per pair
- Distribution
- Phone
- Internet
- Warranty
- Dimensions (W x H x D)
- Weight

2,580 Euro
audioNEXT, Essen
+49 201 79939404
audiodomain.de
2 years
430 x 147 x 310 mm
approx. 18 kg

lp Eversolo
AMP-F10

International 2/25

» The Eversolo AMP-F10 is the ultimate power amplifier special offer: powerful and unshakeable sound, technically perfect and unbeatable value for money.



DANCES WITH THE FUNNEL

About 21 years ago, Heinrich Amand Basilius Martion promised me that he would “soon” drop by with a new loudspeaker. He kept his word.



Due to a lack of suitable positioning options, we were unable to operate the low and mid-high frequency components on top of each other



Rear view of one of the best speakers I've ever experienced

Background

This announcement became a running joke between us. Whenever we met over the years, Heiner would renew his promise, and we would both laugh heartily and get back to business. Recently, however, the now almost 77-year-old loudspeaker prodigy got serious and installed his “Aeonor” model in our listening room, even though it’s not particularly well suited to the space. The result, however, is nothing short of

The Aeonor works as a perfect point source from as low as 100 hertz – that’s probably unique

stunning and, like hardly any other solution, qualifies as an investment for people who have tried everything and are looking for the one, the big, the last playback machine. And who have the necessary spare cash, because the fun starts at around 75,000 euros. As always with these highly customized designs, the upper limit is almost impossible to predict.

As with any extreme hi-fi product, it is difficult to separate man and machine at Martion. Anyone who gets to know the lively and energetic long-time Berliner (he was born in Fulda) knows that the man cannot help but produce something extraordinary. Creativity oozes from every pore of his seven loudspeaker models: who else would think of calling a cylindrical subwoofer “i-mer”?

With a degree in studio engineering, Martion has been a sound engineer for some of the most exclusive clubs for decades, and last year he delighted celebrity entrepreneur Richard Branson with a custom sound solution.



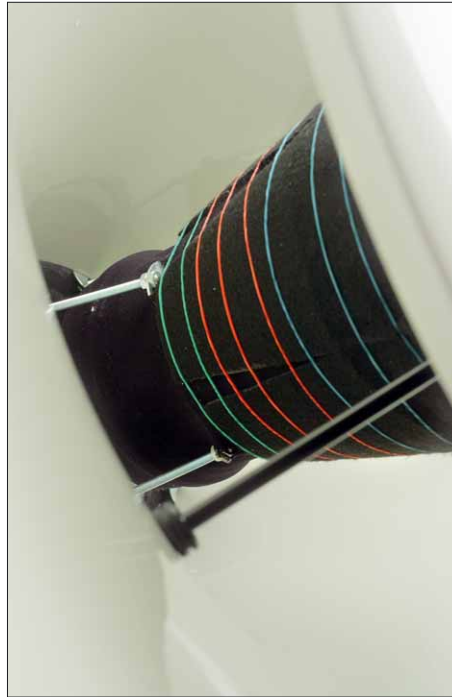
Heiner Basil Martion with another of his creations, the “Organ” model

Concept

Martion is a fervent advocate of the horn principle, believing that maximum efficiency is one of the key factors that define the sound quality of a speaker system. This is nowhere more evident than in the top-of-the-range Aeonor model under discussion here. This is a three-way solution that comes with specially designed active electronics.

The speaker system consists of a corner horn for frequencies between approximately 25 and 100 hertz per channel and a coaxial system of two enormous spherical wave horns that cover the frequency range above that. Martion cites Paul W. Klipsch as his role model; his first encounters with a Klipschorn had a lasting influence on his approach to speaker design. However, Martion's corner horn is equipped with a powerful 18-inch driver and, with an efficiency of an impressive 105 decibels, is actually the quietest part of the system. Due to a lack of suitable corners, we had to improvise a little when setting up the system in our listening room, so the bass horns ended up back to back in the middle of the wall, with a heavy sand-filled panel acting as a divider and simulating the missing wall. It sounds unfavorable, but in practice it doesn't prevent the system from producing an absolutely stunning foundation. The enormous coaxial systems normally reside on the corner horns – just not in our setup. Fortunately, I still had a pair of

JBL cinema bass systems that were perfect as stands for the large funnels. The low-midrange horn, which operates between 100 and 600 hertz, is a huge monster with a diameter of 110 centimeters, which is powered by a 15" driver, as befits its stature.



Rainbow-colored rubber bands hold the rear damping of the high-frequency horn in place

One of the secrets of the Aeonor is the coaxial arrangement of the two horns

Teammates

Turntable:

- Transrotor Massimo Nero / Studio 12"

Pickup Cartridge:

- Transrotor Figaro

Phono preamp:

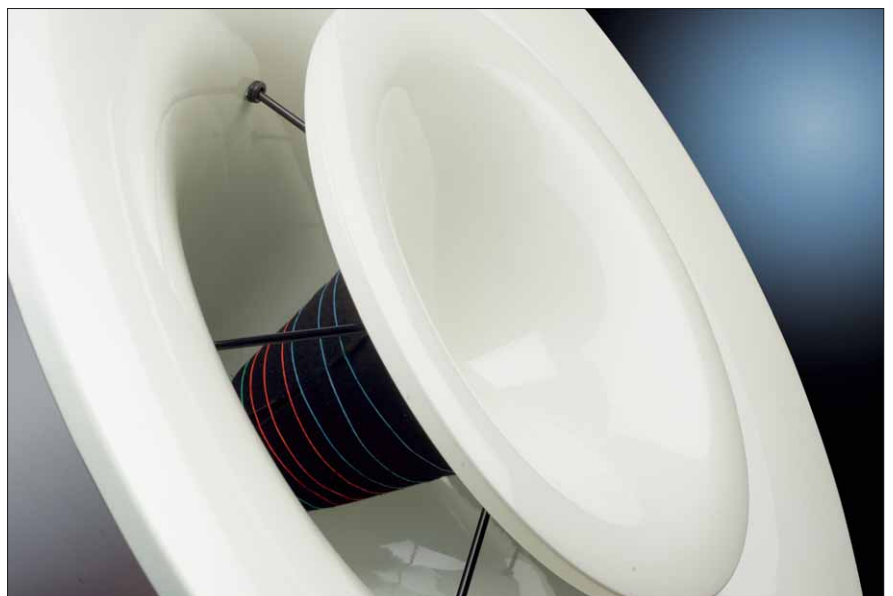
- Thivan Labs P20

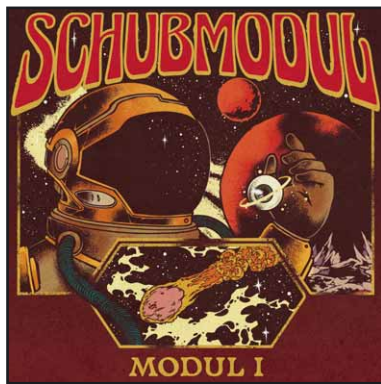
Preamplifier:

- Thivan Labs P20



This is the sound guide inside the high-frequency funnel





What we played

Schubmodul

Modul 1

Steely Dan

Gaucha

The Montgomery Brothers

Grooveyard

Airto

Free



High and midrange drivers are connected via Speakon connectors

The midrange horn has a diameter of 110 centimeters and can play down to 100 hertz

This is housed in a tube attached to the rear and does its job out of sight. The horn itself consists of a plastic shell, which is stabilized at the rear with sand-filled tubes mounted with elastic adhesive. It works perfectly, but takes some getting used to. No problem – a second “horn shell” is available at extra cost to cover the rear.

From 600 hertz, a large pressure chamber driver with a two-inch sound outlet takes over the acoustic reins. It works on a 54-centimeter-diameter spherical wave funnel, which is dampened in exactly the same way as its big brother. Once again, the efficiency levels are at the limits of what is physically possible: 112 decibels at one watt at a distance of one meter for the large horn, 116 for the “small” one.

I find it remarkable that the system does not need a super tweeter and that the two-inch driver is easily capable of playing up to 20 kilohertz.

Incidentally, all drivers are manufactured in Europe. Each one is custom-made for the Wilmersdorf-based company, and we also put our own hands to work on the drivers in our in-house workshop. Martion says, “First and foremost, I’m a mechanic.” His loudspeakers are the result of decades of tweaking every possible screw available to a loudspeaker developer. I am always amazed at how far he has come when I have the opportunity to hear a Martion loudspeaker.

Electronics

Active operation is essential to ensure that the benefits of extreme efficiency are passed on to the listener. Christian Schulz, a graduate sound engineer based in Hanover, has been building electronics designed for such extreme efficiency for 40 years. The amplifiers are push-pull output stages with 200/80/6 watts of power for the individual frequency ranges. Each amplifier is a complete in-house design, specialized for its respective application. The active crossover is also from Schulz. The monophonic design is purely analog and is largely realized with integrated operational amplifiers. Numerous parameters can be adjusted, which is essential for adapting the system to its location. The electronics that Martion used in our system were still very much prototypes, but if necessary, they can of course also be supplied in a more refined form.

Setup

The master himself takes care of setting up and commissioning the Aeonor. He arrives with a measuring microphone and notebook and adjusts the settings until everything is just right, taking into account the measurement results and the customer’s preferences. In our listening room, he opted for a very straightforward setup in terms of measurement technology.



**Repeat after me:
I will listen
to this loudspeaker
one day.**



Introducing the all-new GGNTKT Model M3: an unrivaled blend of performance, design and innovation. This extraordinary loudspeaker stands as a testament to German engineering, capturing both our timeless essence and our futuristic vision of audio technology.

GGNTKT



One channel of the still somewhat provisional three-way active crossover

Sound

Doors are there to be opened, so let's just do that: What Martion's Aeonor system does in our listening room is unparalleled. Whatever music material we feed into the active crossover's XLR inputs, the system converts it into pure adrenaline in an incomparably energetic, colorful, and brutally dynamic way. I often sit in front of really large and expensive systems and think to myself, "Great, that's impressive, you can hear why it's so expensive." But this is something else entirely. Aeonor pulls even the most inexperienced listener out of their lethargy within seconds. Despite

This push-pull output stage supplies a subwoofer with 200 watts of power



As a true corner horn, the sound from the Aeonor bass horn emerges from the rear of the speaker

its linearity in terms of measurement, it sounds rich, full-bodied, warm, and extremely transparent. Rarely have I heard the advantages of the horn principle so convincingly demonstrated as here. And I find it absolutely astonishing how confidently the two reasonably compact corner horns pump even extremely low frequencies into the listening room without showing the slightest sign of blurring or exhaustion. The bass sound is perhaps comparable to that of a PA system at an outdoor music festival. Of course, this can't be as loud, but it's deeper.

The two funnels offer an incredibly detailed and deeply delicate sound image. The level of detail that this brings to light seems to me simply impossible to achieve by other means.

Whether it's a jazz trumpet, a piano, a drumhead, a Les Paul or a voice – every note is a celebration.

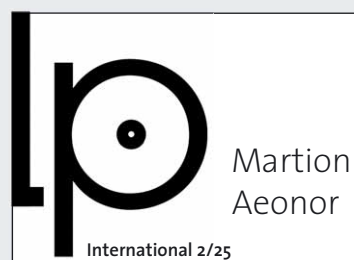
The system will also be on display this year at the High End show, diagonally opposite the Munich MOC, for anyone who is interested. Don't miss it!

Holger Barske

Martion Aeonor



- Complete price 75,000 Euro
- Distribution Martion Audiosysteme, Berlin
- Phone +49 30 8211107
- Internet www.martion.de
- Model customized
- Dimensions (W x H x D) 570 x 980 x 6800 mm
(bass horn)
- 1100 x 700 mm (Mid-treble)
- Weight plenty



» Martion's Aeonor system is undoubtedly one of the most stunning music reproduction devices that money and good words can buy.



SIMPLY SPOT-ON

So little time, and yet so much lasting fame – that's Epos. Music lovers know the name, even though the brand was only active under its original founder for a few years. But over the past two years, it's made a strong comeback – and it's better than ever.



*How it's done:
airflow-optimised bass port,
slanted plinth for ideal
clearance, rounded spikes*



*The age-old question:
with or without cover? We prefer
without, but even with a cover,
there is no acoustic disadvantage*



This is a proper loudspeaker. And to keep things stylish, it comes in beautiful finishes like this "Mint" green – fresh and modern

Epos founder Robin Marshall was a trained mathematician and computer engineer before taking a kind of general studies course at the BBC. At the time, he had no idea he'd end up designing loudspeakers – he still thought of himself as a mathematician. But as he once put it in a 1989 interview with John Atkinson, he soon realised he preferred a soldering iron to a calculator. After two years developing speakers for Monitor Audio, he founded Epos in 1983 – driven by the desire to build something more than just budget loudspeakers. He certainly succeeded, especially with the ES14, which became his most iconic model. In 1988, he sold Epos to Mordaunt-Short – and that chapter came to a close.

The Next Level

Karl-Heinz Fink, by contrast, knew quite early on that he wanted to work with loudspeakers. But he first studied surveying. Through intriguing turns – including a job at a hi-fi shop in Duisburg and work at the HiFi Vision magazine – he found his way to loudspeaker manufacturer IQ, eventually launching his own company. Since then, he's been doing what he still does today: designing speakers. Many for others – but increasingly, under his own name. One route led to FinkTeam, another to Epos. He appreciated Robin Marshall's honesty in a relatively recent interview, where Marshall admitted that he no longer listens to his own loudspeakers – especially

not old Epos models – and wouldn't build the legendary ES14 the same way again. That was the extent of his knowledge at the time.

Epos 2.0

After launching his own models, the BORG and KIM, under FinkTeam, Fink had covered the high-end niche. He now wanted to do something "a bit more normal." So when Michael Creek – who had owned the dormant Epos brand for some time – wanted to streamline his business, the opportunity was perfect. And if you're wondering, like I did, what "28N" stands for – it's simple: "N" is for Neu (new), the 7 model didn't exist yet, and the 28 is just double 14. Fink-style naming logic.

From the Bottom Up

The ES-28N's two 18cm woofers use the same basket and magnet system as the mid-bass driver in the ES-14N: a dual-magnet system combining ferrite and neodymium for increased directivity. For the ES-28N, Fink uses a flat-cut cone (unlike the curved NAWI cone in the ES-14N), which he sees as ideal for low-frequency drivers. A large inverted dust cap reinforces the cone. The magnet system includes aluminium demodulation rings to stabilise voice coil inductance, resulting in fewer harmonic and intermodulation distortions. The voice coil itself is substantial – 36mm x 18mm – with a non-conductive epoxy/glass fibre former to prevent eddy currents.

At the Core

The midrange driver is based on the ES-7N mid-woofer. Its polypropylene cone is injection-moulded with mica-enhanced granulate, increasing stiffness. The rubber surround has low hysteresis – that's the "memory effect" of the material, and it's kept deliberately low. The Nomex spider handles high temperatures and ensures linear, controlled excursion. The 30mm voice coil (again using an epoxy former) includes an impedance ring to minimise distortion and interference. A dual ferrite magnet increases motor strength and reduces stray losses.

The elliptical tweeter is the result of very careful development, which has more than paid off, because it is a real masterpiece





Karl-Heinz Fink and his team leave nothing to chance. Take, for example, the defined tilt angle of the base. You can hear it all

High frequencies

Fink spent considerable time developing the tweeter used across the Epos range. It features a 28mm voice coil, a ceramic-coated aluminium alloy diaphragm, a strong ferrite magnet, and an airflow-optimised internal design. You won't find this driver at standard suppliers – all Fink drivers are in-house developments, not modified OEM parts.

Crossover

As with the ES-14N, the crossover design is the polar opposite of what Robin Marshall once pursued. Rather than being minimalist, it's deliberately complex – classic Fink. And his talent for making the whole system sound cohesive is just as evident here. The rationale for the ES-28N's electrical design is easy to follow. Fink didn't favour

a 2-way design with twin woofers. While a D'Appolito configuration – where woofers flank the tweeter – might work in theory, the ideal ear-level height (about 1m) would require an overly tall speaker. A 2.5-way layout, where the lower woofer only handles bass and the upper reaches into the mids, didn't appeal either – Fink dislikes how that disperses midrange energy. So why compromise? Better to go full 3-way. An impedance compensation circuit in the midrange makes life easier for valve amps. Sensitivity is average, but the impedance minimum is a healthy 3.9 ohms at 100 Hz. The crossover points are at 330 Hz and 2.7 kHz, using 12dB and 24dB Linkwitz-Riley slopes respectively – another sign of the design's care.

Cabinet

Fink's team spent serious time on cabinet design. The tweeter had to sit at a height of one metre, with the midrange in a separate enclosure below it. The two woofers are placed close together to better control floor reflections – boomy bass has no place in Fink's world. The frequency response is tapered slightly from around 300 Hz downward. Fink explains: "We listened to a

If you can, you can: the midrange driver in the Epos ES-28N is a gem in this perfectly tuned 3-way design

No-nonsense: Single wiring, end of story. The crossover sits just below the top panel. Old debate: With or without grille? We prefer without – but it sounds great either way



Teammates

Turntable:

• [Transrotor Massimo Nero](#)

Tone arm:

• [Transrotor Studio 12](#)

Power amplifier:

• [Exposure 3510](#)

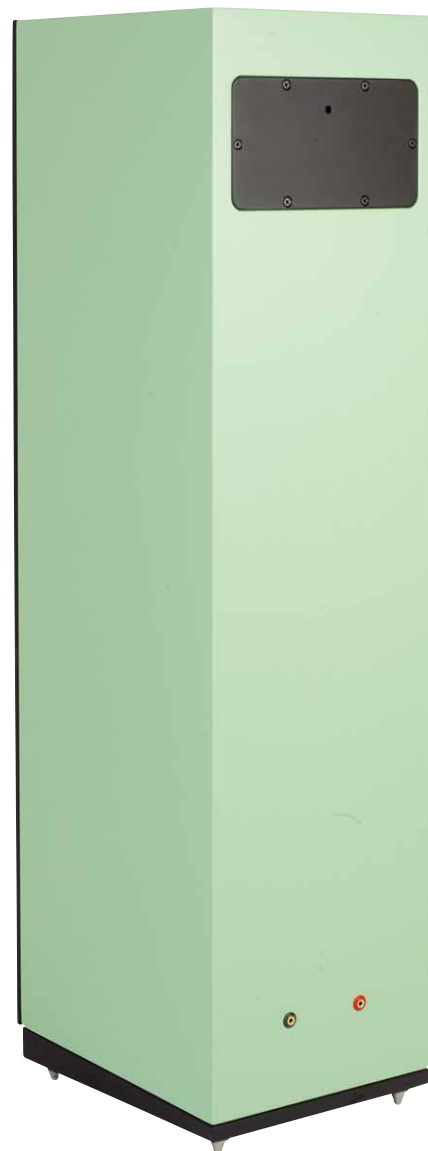
Phono preamp:

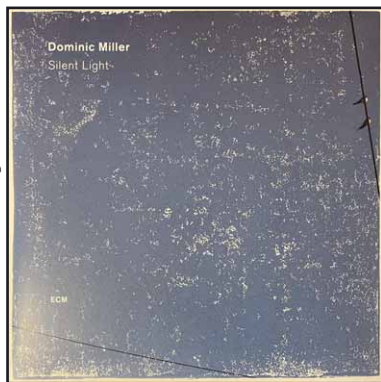
• [Thivan Labs X10](#)

Competitors

Loudspeaker:

• [Wilson Audio Tune Tot](#)





What we played

Dominic Miller
Silent Light

Gianmaria Testa
Montgolfières

The Montgomery Brothers
Groove Yard

Oliver Nelson
The Blues And The Abstract Truth

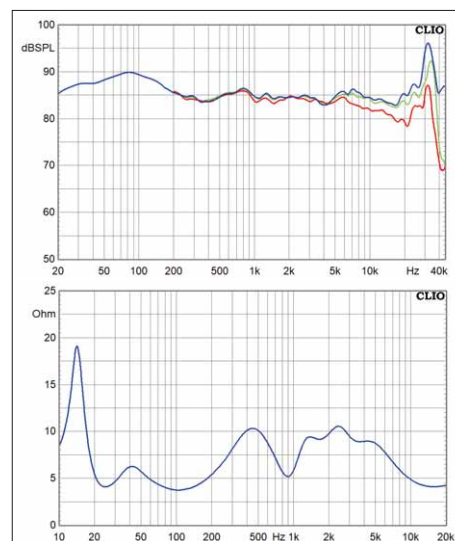
Róisín Murphy
Take Her Up To Monto

One of the two woofers with its specially shaped membrane and the rather unusual, inverted dust protection dome

lot of music to strike the right balance between fast, clean bass and enough substance for all music genres.” The bass reflex port is located in the bottom panel, with spikes providing clearance. The port ends halfway up the cabinet – its position helps prevent unwanted midrange leakage. As always with Fink, the cabinet is a constrained-layer design: two MDF panels decoupled by a high-damping adhesive layer. The front baffle is a hefty 50mm thick, with strategic bracing. The mid and high-frequency drivers have their own compartments; the crossover is mounted in the tweeter’s section, safely isolated from woofer air pressure.

Music

From the first notes, I was captivated. Could this be the perfect loudspeaker? They say perfection is a sin, but the ES-28N comes dangerously close. It’s tuned deep, so placement and amp matching are key. The Exposure 3510 integrated amp made a superb partner. With Dominic Miller’s wonderfully meditative Silent Light, a deep calm set in – I felt myself breathe out. When the percussion entered, it was fast and precise. Subtle details I’d previously



Measurements

Lab commentary

The ES-28N is a true three-way system with a wideband midrange driver that covers from around 350 Hz to 3.5 kHz – the critical music range. The twin 18cm woofers are tuned to a low 25 Hz via a reflex system. The complex impedance curve shows the crossover was carefully engineered, including compensation for the upper bass resonance. Distortion measurements are exemplary – thanks to the ample membrane area, the ES-28N stays composed even at high volumes.

missed now surfaced effortlessly.

Gianmaria Testa sang with a relaxed yet powerful presence, as though just for me. On one track, birdsong and children’s voices emerged – had they always been there? The piano’s attack and decay was breathtaking, as was the tactile quality of Wes Montgomery’s guitar. I could almost feel the string gauge. The Groove Yard album was aptly named – these guys groove like mad. On “Back to Back,” Wes and Buddy Montgomery weave guitar and piano lines with such elegance – I felt like the record label boss previewing the mix. The next track showcased shimmering highs, slow-motion plucks from Wes, and rich bass from Monk Montgomery – truly hypnotic. And the Epos reproduced all this with such dreamlike finesse that I was moved to tears. Wes’s sublime solo, his melodic phrasing – all rendered with effortless grace. Elegant is the word that kept coming to mind. And live. Like a studio concert in your living room. An experience.

Christian Bayer

Epos ES-28N



- Price per pair 8,000 Euro
- Distribution IDC Klaassen, Lünen
- Phone +49 231 22178822
- Internet www.idc-klaassen.com
- Warranty 2 years
- Dimensions (W x H x D) 1050 x 250 x 360 mm
- Weight approx. 35 kg



» The Epos ES-28N is a loudspeaker I'd recommend to friends – friends who want an exceptional all-rounder for music and to end their speaker search once and for all.

CAN THEY STILL DO IT?

For years, tube amplifiers from Vietnamese manufacturer Thivan Labs were all the rage in the hi-fi scene. Things have quietened down somewhat in the product portfolio, but there's no sign of complacency in the development department.







An 18-kilogram phono preamplifier at its finest: the Thivan Labs P20



The input impedance of the MC input can be adjusted via a rotary switch

Background

There was once a device called the P5, the first phono preamplifier from Thivan Labs, which we reviewed in 2020. At the time, it was only capable of amplifying MM signals, and MC operation required upgrading with an external transformer – which Thivan Labs also supplied on request.

In the meantime, the whole thing has mutated into a “proper” complete solution called the P20, which is what we’re going to talk about here. This means that the P20 is fully MC-compatible from the outset because the MC transformers are built in. Remember: tube-equipped phono preamps – and that’s what we’re dealing with here – are only capable of lifting the tiny signals from MC cartridges to a usable level to a very limited extent. Voltages in the microvolt range are not the preferred working range for electron tubes – although there are a few fairly well-functioning counterexamples on the market. As a general rule, however, the following applies to MC operation: if you want a tube equalizer, you have to use a transformer upstream.

Features

And there is no doubt that the Vietnamese manufacturer has delivered an absolute gem in this respect: four tubes in the 18-kilogram full-size housing amplify the phono signals, and the topology is noticeably

Teammates

Turntable:

- TechDAS Air Force III / Reed 3p / Reed 1X

Tonabnehmer:

- Skyanalog Diamond
- Denon DL-103R

Power amplifier:

- Thivan Labs 811 Anniversary

Loudspeaker:

- DIY Focal / JBL

Competitors

Phono preamp:

- Clearaudio Balance Reference



You can watch the tubes at work through a Plexiglas cover

different from that of the P5 model mentioned at the beginning. The innovations come at a price: at Euro 3,800, the P20 is in the upper price range, so it has to deliver accordingly.

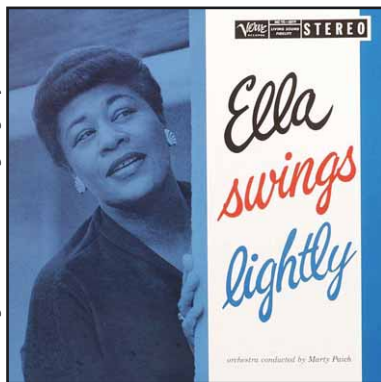
On the front panel, there are two rotary knobs and a toggle switch next to the power switch. The left knob adjusts the output level, making the P20 ideal for direct connection to a power amplifier. On the right, you can switch between three inputs: two pairs of RCA jacks are reserved for MM cartridges, while the third is for MC cartridges. On the output side, a pair of

XLR connectors joins a single RCA output. These are transformer-coupled outputs, which we will discuss later.

The toggle switch on the front of the device looks mysterious, as it switches between “Standard” and “Dynamic” modes. In practice, this merely turns out to be a variation in the overall gain of about four decibels. And, of course, the louder setting is “Dynamic.” With the level control turned up all the way (which should be the normal setting when operating the device with a preamplifier or power amplifier, i.e., not using the level control), the device deli-



It's a shame that the XLR outputs are not balanced



What we played

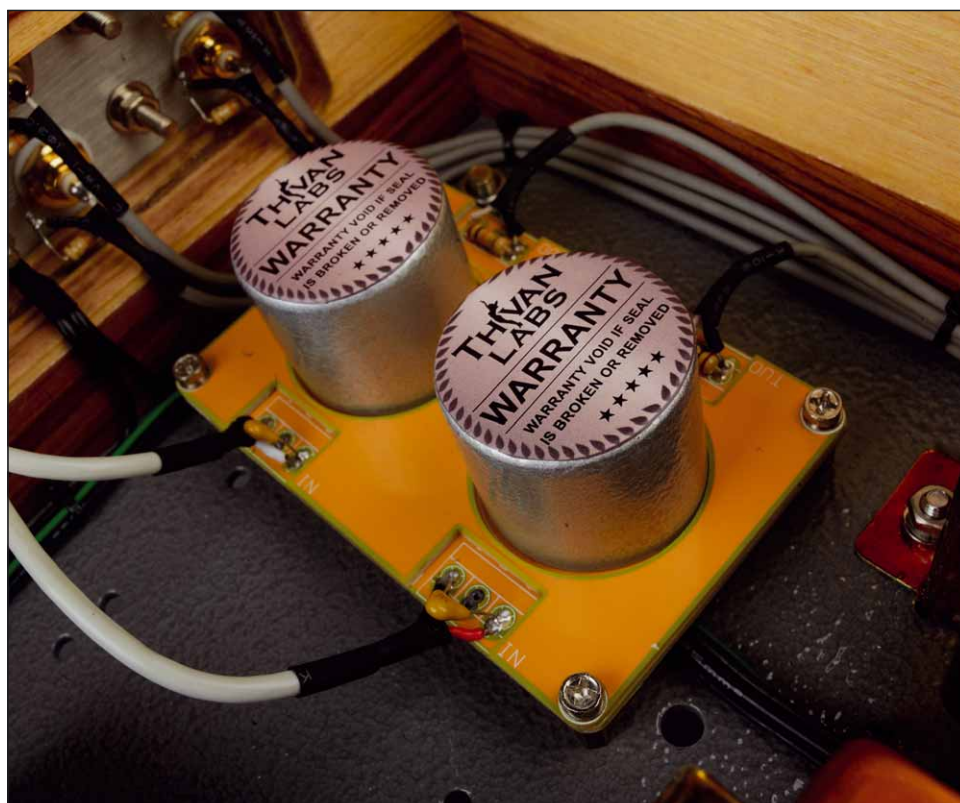
Ella Fitzgerald
Ella Swings Lightly

Chet Baker
Chet

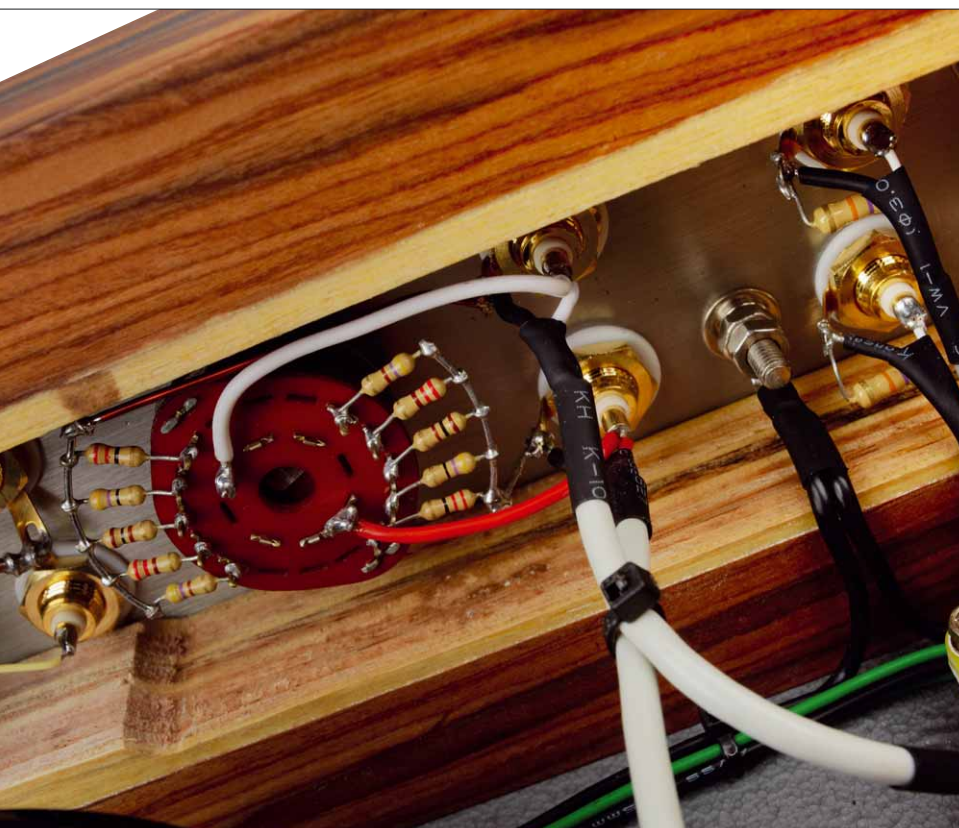
Buffy Clyro
Ellipsis

Verdi
Karajan, Tebaldi, Simionato,
Bergonzi – Aida

*The MC input impedance is
switched before the transformers*



*The MC transformers
do an excellent job*



vers between 47 and about 65.5 decibels of gain, which is within the normal range for almost all common cartridges. Only extremely quiet MCs would benefit from a few more decibels of amplification, but these are rare. From this, we can conclude that the built-in transformers amplify by about 14.5 decibels, which is rather modest.

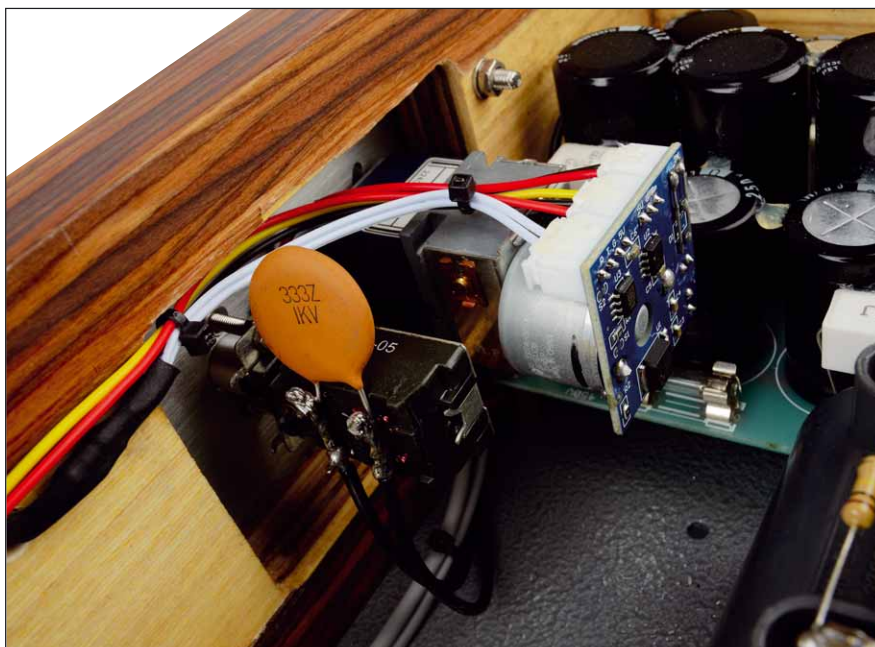
Mechanics

From a purely mechanical point of view, this Thivan device is once again a feast for all the senses. It is housed in a real wood veneer frame, with extremely sturdy sheet steel plates at the top and bottom providing solidity. A Plexiglas window in the front right corner allows you to watch the four tubes at work, while generous ventilation holes ensure proper airflow.

The full splendor of the design only becomes apparent after removing the cover, which, thanks to a clever fastening system, can be done with a single screw and a little finesse.

Technology

As always, the interior of the device is extremely neat and tidy, with three transformers and two chokes in addition to the two MC transformers. The latter are likely to be used for filtering high and heating voltages. Two transformers form the link between the output stage and the output sockets. Unfortunately, for reasons I cannot understand, the manufacturer has missed the opportunity here to connect the XLR sockets with truly balanced signals. That leaves the last inductor in the group – the mains transformer. The impressive toroidal model would also look good in a full-grown integrated amplifier. Otherwise, we are pleased with the ample filtering capacity and various fine NOS components in the signal path. The tube board features two ECC83 (12AX7), one ECC82 (12AU7),



An ALPS motor potentiometer provides remote volume control

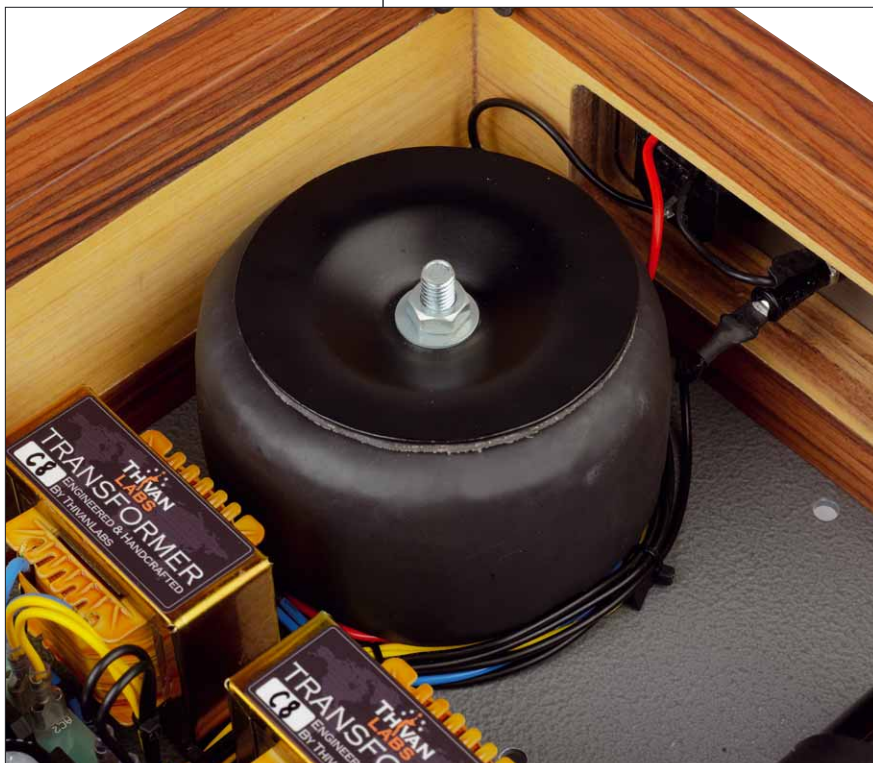


As usual with Thivan: the construction of the device is a work of art



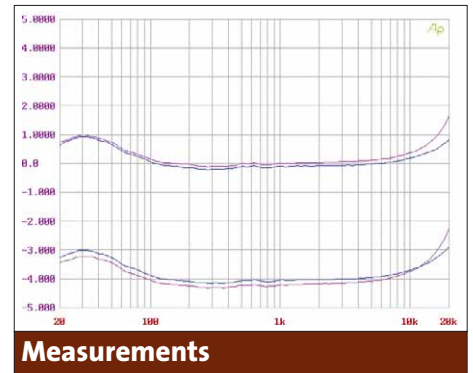
The three Noval tubes do their job protected by shielding cups

A giant power transformer supplies the device with power



and one 6SN7. For the latter, the manufacturer relies on good old Soviet-made components, with one of these double triode systems forming the output stage of the device. The three Noval tubes are shielded from external interference by protective cups, which is certainly no mistake in a phono preamplifier.

A sticker on the two input transformers warns that removing the sticker will void the warranty – which is not without irony. Let's not kid ourselves: the circuit board with the two transformers can be purchased (without the warranty sticker) on Ali-express. That's not a bad thing in itself, but as a device manufacturer, you should be upfront about it. The MC input impedance, which can be set to five different values between 222 and 470 ohms using a rotary switch on the rear panel, is controlled by resistors directly at the input and not, as is usually the case, after the input transformers.



Lab commentary

The frequency response curve shows the P20 in MM mode in both switch positions (standard and dynamic). In general, there are very slight (one decibel) increases at the lower and upper ends of the spectrum, but otherwise the behavior is identical except for a level difference of around four decibels. In MM mode at 5 mV at the input, we measured a signal-to-noise ratio of 57.3 decibels (A), channel separation of 41.2 decibels (A) and distortion of 0.25 percent. With MC transformers at 0.5 mV, the results were 45.1/44.7 dB(A) and 0.39 percent THD. The device consumes a constant 24.5 watts of power.

Sound

Let's give the P20 a chance to shine and pair it with the fantastic Skyanalog anniversary cartridge, the "Diamond." With the P20, this dream MC needs to be set a little higher than usual, which is why we moved the rotary switch to the 470-ohm position. Operated in this way, it produced a wonderfully round, almost floral sound. The Thivan Phono makes no secret of the fact that it is a tube device and spoils you with a warm bass and slightly ethereal highs. This is not for linearity fanatics, but definitely for pleasure listeners. However, they are sure to enjoy the convincingly energetic voice of Ella Fitzgerald, the extremely soulful and detailed trumpet sound of Chet Baker, and the excellent dynamic range of Karajan's Aida. Fortunately, the character remains unchanged even when using a much more down-to-earth cartridge such as the Denon DL-103R, which, incidentally, also feels most at home at 470 ohms. If you want pure tube feeling in your phono section, the P20 is a hot tip.

Holger Barske

Thivan Labs P20



- Price
- Distribution
- Phone
- Internet
- Warranty
- Dimensions (W x H x D)
- Weight

3,800 Euro
TCG GmbH, Nordhorn
+49 5921 7884927
www.thivanlabs.de
2 years
450 x 125 x 400 mm
approx. 18 kg

lp Thivan Labs
P20

International 2/25

» Rich, colorful, powerful, and just a tiny bit overly beautiful: Thivan Labs' P20 conjures pure tube flair into your listening room.



FOR BEGINNERS OF A SPECIAL KIND

My goodness, what a beast. 38 kilograms
of fully amplified glory from Denmark.





The “face” of Vitus devices is a very pleasant constant throughout the company’s history

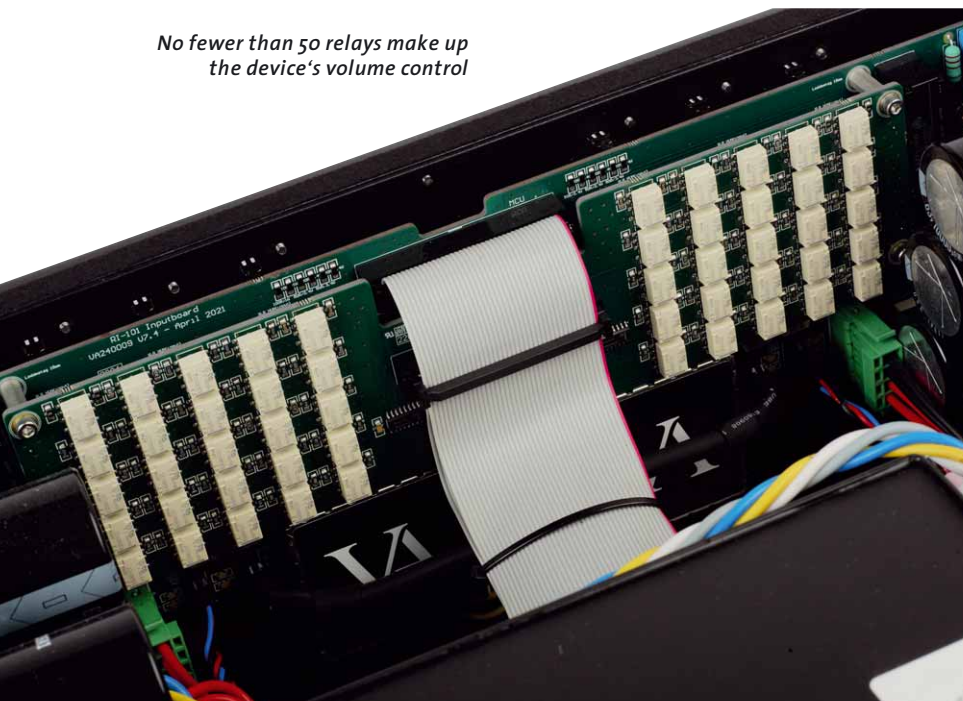
We have had three phono preamplifiers from the prestigious manufacturer in our northern neighbor over the years. But we only had one of the legendary Vitus integrated amplifiers, and that was ages ago (issue 1/2008). The test model at

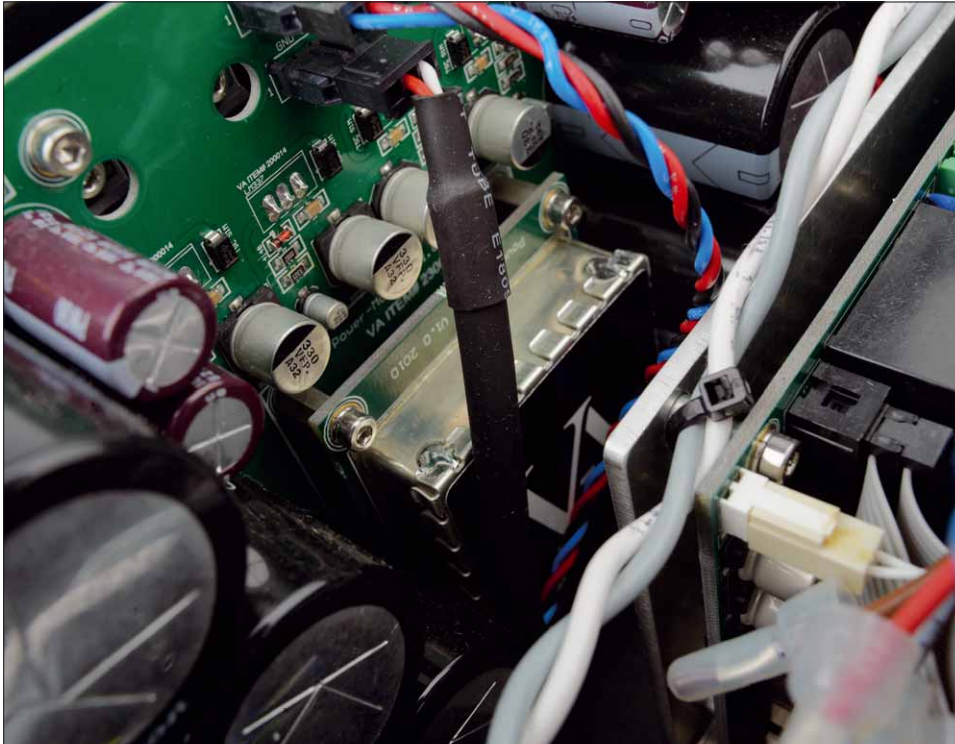
the time was called SS-010 and was a purebred Class A amplifier with 25 watts of output power per channel and a machine that I still remember with fondness to this day. Now weighing three kilograms more, 52 millimeters taller, and 6,250 euros more expensive (i.e., 18,250 euros in total), the RI-101 MK.II model is a real statement on the integrated amplifier market. Vitus Audio is probably the only manufacturer out there that calls its entry-level series the “Reference” series, which from the outset documents the quality standards of these Scandinavian-style gems.

The RI-101 MK.II is no exception. The manufacturer claims that “the RI-101 Mk.II will happily sit at the heart of your system for a lifetime,” meaning that if you buy this device, you will never have to worry about the “heart of your system” again.

The device is based on the RI-101 released in 2017. The fact that the update to the MK.II version was very cautious speaks for the quality of the original concept.

No fewer than 50 relays make up the device’s volume control





The silver shielding box contains the essential part of the amplifier technology

The RI-101 MK.II is essentially a classic Class A/B integrated amplifier with decent output power. Nevertheless, the manufacturer has given it a generous amount of quiescent current: the machine generates between eight and 16 watts (depending on the load impedance) in A mode, which is more than enough for listening to music even at high volumes. The rest is, as they say, nothing more than “headroom.”

There is no phono option for the RI-101 MK.II, but there are two optional digital boards: the pure D/A converter board with USB, TOSLINK, S/PDIF & AES inputs costs an additional \$4,000, while the option with an additional Roon-compatible streamer costs \$4,500. Which, if you ask me, is the more sensible option.

The device has the same distinctive look that has remained virtually unchanged

Teammates

Turntable:

- Transrotor Massimo Nero / Studio 12“

Pickup Cartridge:

- Transrotor Figaro

Phono preamp:

- Thivan Labs P20

Loudspeaker:

- Epos ES-28N
- PS Audio Aspen FR10
- Fyne Vintage Classic Gold XV SP

Competitors

Integrated amplifier::

- Soulnote A-3
- Exposure 3510 Integrated

XLR connectors dominate the rear panel, but two unbalanced sources can also be connected





What we played

Chuck Mangione
Children Of Sanchez

Cigarettes After Sex
S/T

The XX
XX

The XX
I See You

Slomosa
S/T

*The design of this
powerhouse is
extremely tidy*

since the company's early days: two solid front panels frame a narrow dark center strip, behind which the display is hidden. This is a small but very clear and easy-to-read dot matrix display, which I have only seen in this form from Vitus Audio. If not via remote control, the device is operated using three buttons on each side of the front panel, a feature that the manufacturer has consistently implemented across all devices in its portfolio, right up to the powerful power amplifiers of the "Masterpiece" series.

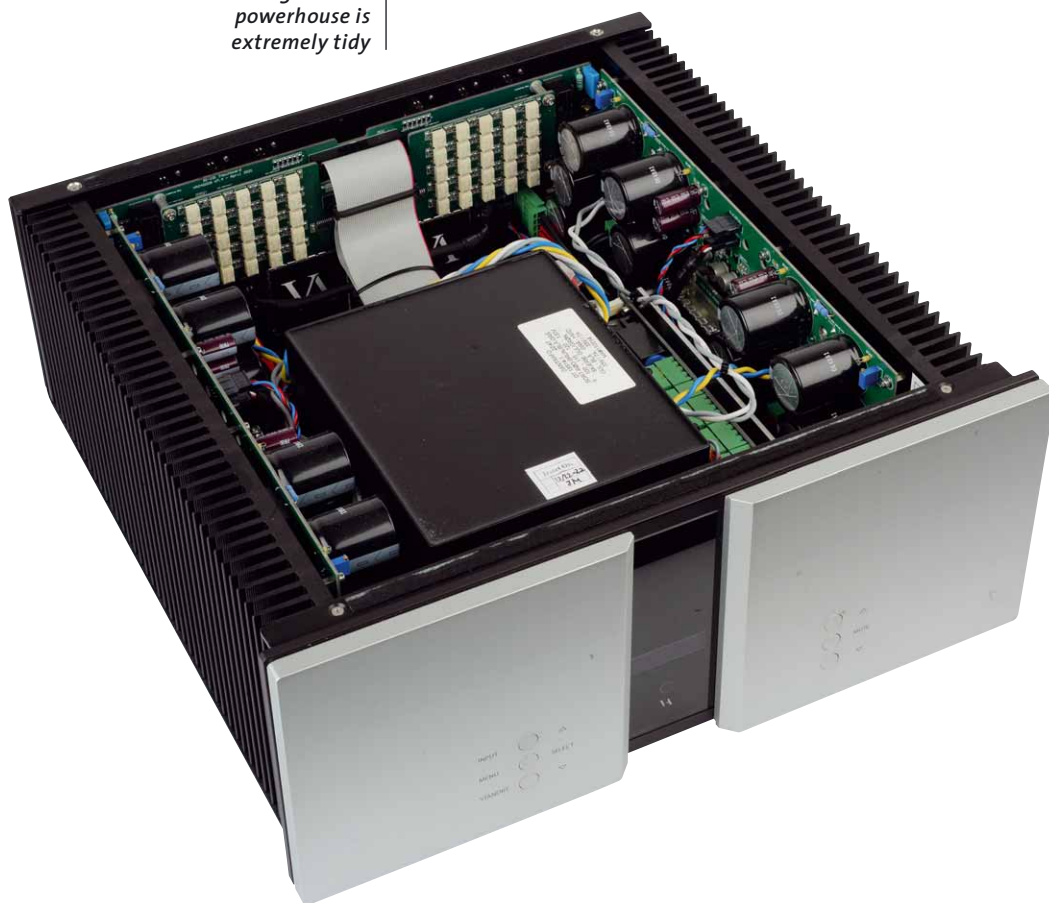
I have to briefly complain about the remote control: the cheap Chinese copy of the famous Apple remote works fine, but is rather unworthy of a device in this price range.

Things are much more trustworthy on the back of this heavyweight: two pairs of sturdy brass pole terminals from professional electronics are provided for speaker connection, a far cry from any audiophile boutique models. There are five analog inputs: three balanced and two unbalanced. All connectors are from professional equipment manufacturer Neutrik, and the RCA

jacks are also housed in the "flange sockets" familiar from XLR connectors. A preamp output is available in a fully balanced version – should you ultimately decide to upgrade your power amp setup. Whether you want to consider bi-amping or connect a subwoofer.

Company founder and chief developer Hanz Ole Vitus has always been very reserved when it comes to the technical details of his creations. Even though he sold digital signal processors for Texas Instruments for many years, his heart beats for analog and discrete music reproduction. In other words, his amplifier circuits are almost exclusively implemented with individual semiconductors; chips are only used for peripheral functions and (unavoidably) in digital signal processing.

Despite the bulky format of the device, things are pretty tightly packed under the cover. This is mainly due to the enormous power transformer, which is centrally located in a shielding metal housing. For once, this is not one of the almost inevitable toroidal types, but a classic laminated transformer with an "EI" core. Hans Ole



LP Hoodie or T-Shirt »GEFÜHLSECHT«



- Front and back print
- 100% cotton
- Available in sizes S – XXXL

**DON'T JUST
LISTEN TO MUSIC,
PUT IT ON!**

NEW
at www.hifitest.de/shop



Pay conveniently
with PayPal or Amazon Pay

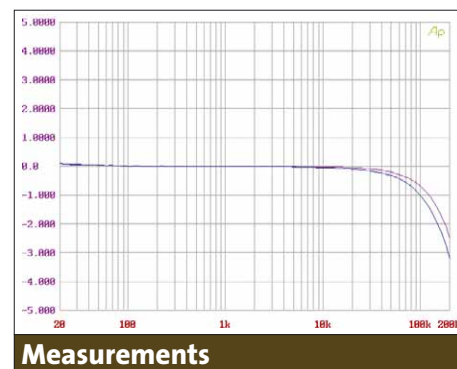


The mains transformer is housed in a separate shielded enclosure.

Vitus has always been a fan of the “recovery behavior” of this design, which is significantly less problematic than ring cores. In his larger models, he goes one step further and uses so-called “UI” cores, which result in even more expansive dimensions for the same performance. Vitus deliberately ignores the major advantages of ring core transformers—compact design and low stray field.

Vitus also goes all out when it comes to volume control: a total of 50 relays switch fixed resistors that vary the level in 88 steps of one decibel each. This works completely silently (in the signal) and is exactly the right gradation. Due to a lack of information, there is little to say about the circuit technology; the “hard core” of the power amplifiers is hidden in a shielding metal box on each of the two power amplifier modules. These have plenty of cooling surface, and I decided not to conduct intensive research into the type and number of output transistors – there are enough, that much is certain.

In practice, thanks to moderate power dissipation values (around 90 watts when idle), the device does not get too warm



Lab commentary

There were no weaknesses to be expected here – and there aren't any. The Vitus delivers perfect linearity up to 200 kilohertz and outputs around 262 watts at eight ohms and 312 watts at four ohms – the manufacturer was a little optimistic with its specifications here. At eight ohms and one watt, we measured 85.7 decibels (A) signal-to-noise ratio and 77.8 decibels (A) channel separation, and a total harmonic distortion of 0.0067 percent. At four ohms, the figures are 83.5 and 77.7 decibels (A) and 0.141 percent total harmonic distortion. When idle, the device consumes a good 90 watts from the mains.

and also wakes up relatively quickly from its sonic standby slumber. The machine signals its readiness for operation with the gentle clicking of numerous relays and was quite convincing in its ability to make friends with numerous speakers. Perhaps the most convincing pairing proved to be with the brand-new Epos ES-28N, whose impressive bass foundation was just the right playground for the Vitus: the three juggled dynamic sovereignty to perfection, the foundation was fast, crisp, never bloated, and absolutely impressive from start to finish. I then allowed myself to indulge in the old Chuck Mangione classic “Children Of Sanchez” for the first time in a long time – because it's just so wonderfully relaxed and direct. The combination also sounds great: the uniquely dreamy voice of Cigarettes After Sex frontman Greg Gonzalez drips like warm honey from the speakers – goosebumps guaranteed. He is particularly good at singing beautiful songs, so I treated myself to two The XX albums afterwards – in this form, they are absolute balm for the soul. Great amplifier!

Holger Barske

Vitus Audio RI-101 MK.II



- Price 18,250 Euro
- Distribution Audio Offensive, Falkensee
- Phone +49 3322 2131655
- Internet www.high-fidelity-studio.de
- Warranty 2 years
- Dimensions (W x H x D) 435 x 182 x 470 mm
- Weight approx. 38 kg

lp

Vitus Audio
RI-101 MK.II

International 2/25

» Nordic cool? No way! The Vitus integrated amplifier is a highly emotional affair; it plays super soft and seductive, but can also really pack a punch when needed.

Now available

in ePaper Stores and
www.carhifi-international.com



Michael E. Brieden
Verlag GmbH
The Test-Specialists
Duisburg · Germany

www.carhifi-international.com



Coming soon:

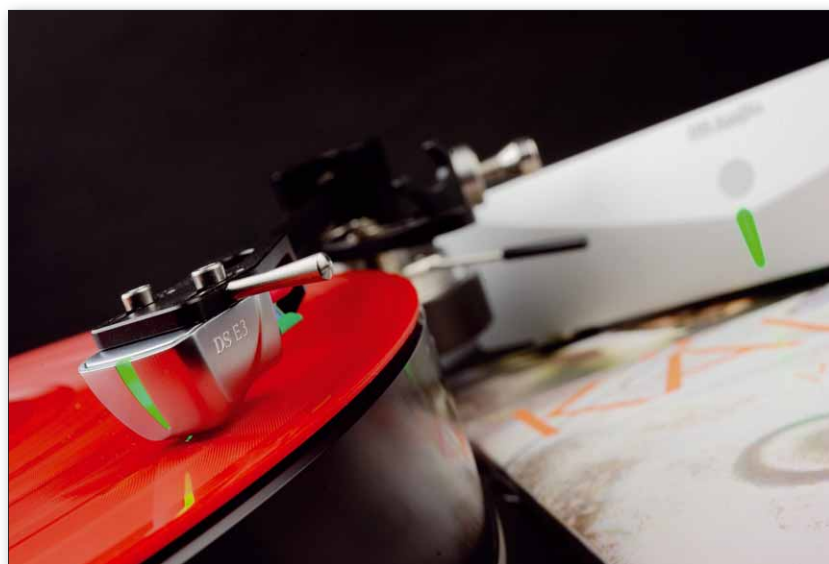
Everything you need

Ortofon amazes with two cartridges from the SPU series with built-in transformers. We combine both with the 12" AS-309R tonearm.



It lights up green

We present the new electro-optical entry-level pickup from Japanese manufacturer DS Audio. Also included: the new matching equalizer.



Michael E. Brieden Verlag

The Test Specialists

- ▶ Editor and Publisher:
Michael E. Brieden Verlag GmbH
Gartroper Straße 42, D-47138 Duisburg
Phone: 0203 4292-0
Web: www.lp-international.info
- ▶ Redaktion LP International
e-mail: post@lp-magazin.de
- ▶ Editor-in-Chief: Holger Barske
- ▶ Editorial management: Dipl.-Phys. Guido Randerath
- ▶ Test and editorial team:
Holger Barske (hb), Thomas Schmidt (ts),
Christian Bayer
- ▶ Freelance authors:
Ralf Henke (rh), Michael Bruss (mb)
- ▶ Photography:
Stephan Schlüter
- ▶ Additional photography:
Holger Barske, Thomas Schmidt, Michael Bruss
- ▶ Art direction, graphics and layout:
Heike Jans, Anna Wagner
- ▶ Test equipment management: Michael Rochow
- ▶ Reader service: Michaela Erkens
- ▶ Ad processing: Heike Pens

© by Michael E. Brieden Verlag GmbH

All rights of publication and reproduction -reserved. Some articles contain products that are subject to trademark or patent protection laws without particular reference. If technical know-how or rights of third parties are used commercially, the respective owner's permission must be obtained. No purchase advice by the editors. A functional guarantee for technical references is not assumed. Results in comparative tests are field-related. Manuscript submissions at own risk, without warranty for return or acceptance.

We reserve the right to reprint letters from readers and to make abridgments. Contributions identified by name do not necessarily represent the editorial opinion. Force majeure releases the publisher from the delivery deadline = AD Claims for compensation cannot be accepted in such cases. All rights reserved.

▶ Next issue LP International September, 2025