

MOLTO VIVACE

This purist amplifier from Audio Analogue is designed to combine pure emotionality and sheer power to create an absolute musical experience. Does it succeed?



Audio Analogue's new integrated amplifier, part of its Pure AA series, is entirely designed in Italy, where it's also manufactured by hand. This is a purely analog audio concept, with no sign of any digital inputs. Yes, there is digital technology onboard, but only for volume control – of which more in a moment.

Its power at 1% (THD+N, i.e. distortion plus noise) is 2x100 watts at 8 ohms, 2x200 watts at 4 ohms and 2x330 watts at 2 ohms (!). A power rating at 2 ohms is rare, as such low impedances are dangerous for most amplifiers and they can even start smoking at such a load – Infinity's infamous Kappa 9 sends greetings. It is therefore a sign of self-confidence, but above all of the current delivery capability of an amplifier, when it is published, and here owes much to the use of a hefty 500VA transformer

The inputs, which include an MM/MC phono stage with switchable subsonic filter, are selected using relays, and the volume is controlled by digital technology without the use of operational amplifiers. A Class A headphone amplifier with variable impedance is also onboard, and the components, which can be seen under the housing cover in a functionally superlative circuit design (see picture on the next page), are consistently of high

quality and even seem to be oversized, in the positive sense. Four high-level connections, one of which is balanced, provide connectivity, preamplifier outputs – an additional mono version for subwoofer outputs – extend the possible application spectrum as well as the possibility of direct power amplifiers, and there's also a unity-gain option for use with an AV processor, for example.

A special feature of the 14 kg amp Italian, whose older brothers "Fortissimo" and "Puccini Anniversary" we already had the chance to test, is the renunciation of global feedback in both the preamp and power amp sections – instead, only local feedback is used in selected areas of the circuitry. According to the developers, this should increase the input impedances, lower the output impedances, stabilize the gain factor and the operating points of the circuit, reduce interference to the power supply and reduce distortion overall. The purpose of this design is to create a particularly light-hearted and dynamic – but still stable and very powerful – reproduction of music.

The operation of the amplifier is also quite smart, even if it does take a little initial familiarization. For example, a short press on the volume control switches the device off and into standby, while four different selectable characteristics are

The remote control unit of Audio Analogue is beautifully finished and controls the most necessary functions. ▶



available for the volume control itself, which makes sense depending on the efficiency of the speakers and listening habits used. For example, with very sensitive speakers one can set the volume control to give finer control in its initial rotation, or conversely to ramp up output quickly for harder-to-drive designs.

This increased user-convenience sets the PureAA line apart from the purist Anniversary series, but as we will see, soundwise they are still quite close. This is inherent in the company's design, including that rejection of global feedback, and the "family sound" of certain brands is also due to the fact that the same developers act according to their own sound preferences under the same conditions and with the same philosophy.

It was to be expected that the distortion values in the STEREO measurement laboratory would be somewhat worse than competitors of a more restrained design, at least on paper, but would of course be completely uncritical. It's not so much the zeros behind the decimal point that are captured in the lab, but rather whether a device touches and convinces during dynamic music playback.

KEYWORD

Feedback: Common circuit design to help amplifiers achieve low distortion and higher attenuation factor.

▲ An object of style from Italy: the majesty of sound originates here.

Pure emotion

The development approach, to achieve high current capability almost without the infamous panacea of feedback, works perfectly with the Analogue Audio, because this amplifier starts like a champ, sweeping temperamentally and powerfully through scores, developing timbres that are usually denser than those delivered by tube amplifiers. The AAcento delivers both coarse and fine dynamics, is a real treat and has loudspeakers – in this case B&W 802D3, DALI Epicon 6 and the Wolf von Langa "Son" – under control in an exemplary manner. The fact that it delivered a virtually balanced shootout with the Symphonic Line Edition, one of our preferred tools in this class, is a definite compliment to the developers.

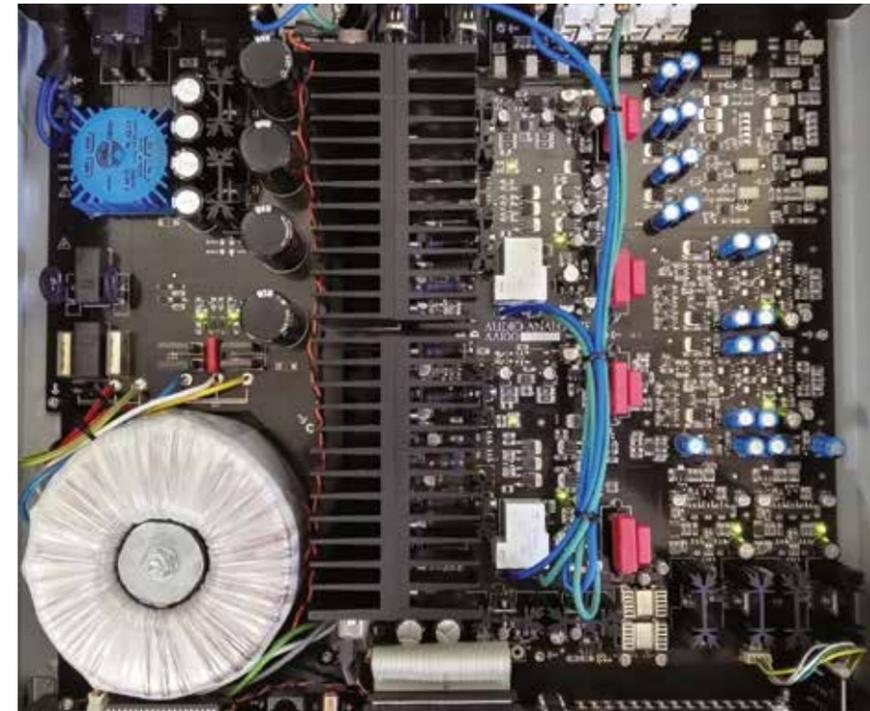
Due to the spectacular development of force and energy, the image is large, expansive and vivid, which not only benefits large orchestral works, but also particularly

dynamic tracks such as "Thunderstruck" by AC/DC. Nevertheless, with Tori Amos' "Winter" the AAcento seems delicate and refined, maybe almost soft, and with "Friday Night in San Francisco" extremely fast, precise and taut, making it easy to follow Paco de Lucia, Al di Meola and John McLaughlin and the sounds of their characteristic guitar virtuosity. It's undoubtedly a very "emotional" and multifaceted device, this AAcento.

This is a simple amplifier and, in the truest sense, incredibly empathetic and adaptable, supple and full-bodied, making the music live and breathe while letting you forget the technology behind it. It helps that the soundstage image is virtually detached from the speakers and that the height and width impression is superior – yes, you need speakers able to allow this, but the Audio Analogue definitely plays its part. Outstanding!

Tom Frantzen

No digital: The Italian has a well thought-out, purely analog connection concept, which includes an XLR input and sub/preamp outputs. ▼



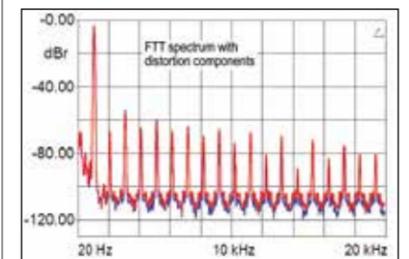
AUDIO ANALOGUE AACENTO



around 3250 €
(available in black or silver)
Dimensions: 45 x 10 x 40 cm (WxHxD)
Warranty: 2 years
Contact: Audio Analogue
Phone: +39 0572 030964
www.audioanalogue.com

Extremely emotional and musical, this powerful amplifier from Italy offers MM/MC phono, and very careful technical conception (without over-all feedback) and build. This is a device designed to make great friends.

LAB MEASUREMENTS



Continuous power (8 Ohm / 40hm)	102 W/148 W
Pulse power 4 Ohm (1kHz)	200 W
Distortion at 50mW/5W/1dB Pmax	0.4 %/0.2 %/0.4 %
Intermod. 50mW/5W/1dB Pmax	0.3 %/0.06 %/0.1 %
Signal-to-noise ratio at 50mW/ 5W 7	7.8 dB/95.2 dB
Phono MM (5 mV for 5 Watt)	79.3 dB (A)
Noise ratio Phono MC (0.5 mV for 5 Watt)	61.4 dB (A)
attenuation at 4 Ohm (63Hz/1kHz/14kHz)	100/83/60
Upper cut-off frequency (-3dB/40hm)	>80 kHz
Crosstalk Line 1 > Line 2	67.6 dB
Synchronization error volume at -60dB	0.1 dB
Stereo channel separation at 10kHz	77.8 dB
Power consumption Standby/Idle	0.5 W/39W

LAB COMMENTS: Good to very good measured values: the low feedback is "betrayed" by the only moderate but uncritical distortion values – but not by the damping factor, which remains high.

FEATURES

Remote control, Phono-MM/-MC, balanced high level input, switchable volume characteristics.

STEREO-TEST
SOUND QUALITY **82%**
PRICE/PERFORMANCE
★★★★☆
EXCELLENT