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Reprint

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 SYNÄSTEC AUDIO

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Synästec Audio Volatus 200:

Second Piece of Luck



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We tend to fancy mono blocks as power amps which are mighty in many respects: awful in weight, huge in dimensions and with an extremely high and notably stable output power. The benefits of such monos lie in the technical and physical separation of the two stereo channels. Better crosstalk figures, fewer interferences and greater S/N ratio specs can mostly be observed compared with stereo power or integrated amplifiers.

Since at Synästec they seem to have efficiently banned the word compromise, it's obvious that for the power amplification – at least for the time being – mono blocks are offered exclusively. The fact that these won't submit to the cliché mentioned at the beginning, can already be recognised by their utterly small housing dimensions: The Volatus are just 40 centimetres wide and barely nine centimetres high, but tip the scales at more than 18 kilogrammes per piece. So far mono blocks with similar dimensions have been available e.g. from Audiolab; however, they rather belong to the hifi than the high-end market.

Let's have some fun now

The front panel of the enclosure, which is milled from a massive aluminium block, has a pushbutton switch to chan-

Lately i-fidelity.net has reviewed the super high-end Bivium preamp from Synästec Audio. For this reason we, of course, don't want to withhold its congenial partners, the Volatus 200 mono power amps, from you. Let's see if they can soar to sublime acoustic spheres as well.

ge the operating status from standby to active. Next to it we spot the company name in a superfine engraving – and that's about it. The rear side presents a soothing purism: an IEC mains socket with a switch, one pair of loudspeaker outputs and an RCA or XLR input, selectable via toggle switch; the latter is strongly recommended for the combination with the Bivium preamp.

When removing the bottom plate, the meticulous design layout of the amplifier instantly catches the eye. The most prominent feature are no doubt the two 250 watts toroidal transformers whose voltage is most carefully conditioned and stored temporarily in 30 electrolytic caps with a capacitance of 1,200 μF each. Distributing the total of 36,000 μF onto so many peripheral parts shall guarantee a lightning-fast supply

of up to 60 ampères under tough conditions – and this means with transient peaks. Please do not forget, this effort only relates to the amplification of a single channel!

Due to their compact size, the experts among you will probably have realised very soon that the Volatus must be amplifiers that work in class D mode. According to Synästec Audio the gain stage has an innovative error correction loop which recognises residual interferences even right before the speaker output and eliminates them. At least in the i-fidelity.net measuring lab we couldn't substantiate anything to the contrary. Another advantage of this amplifier concept is the low generation of heat. The module is firmly connected to the aluminium housing to ensure optimum thermal conductivity.

Now let's take a concluding look at the housing. The inside is not fully reamed so that caps bank and amplifier block are separated from the transformers by a massive partition wall. The pc boards have also been mounted with utmost accuracy. Of course it's not just that nothing is rattling or shaking; the resistance against knocking and bending tests is also impressive. Consequently the Volatus are in no way inferior to the Synästec Audio Bivium preamp.

Ready for the new dimension

Needless to say, in order to drive the Volatus 200 we were working preferably with the preamp from the same manufacturer. For the source we chose the Audionet VIP G3 that i-fidelity.net uses primarily as SACD and CD player. For the loudspeakers we picked the KEF Reference 205/2, Canton's 9.2 and the T+A CWT 500, linked via HMS Concertato or Gran Finale Jubilee cables. And for the balanced wiring between the amplifiers we decided after several listening sessions in favour of the cables supplied by Synästec Audio.



Via toggle switch the user can select between RCA and XLR input.



In terms of sound the Synästec Audio combination offers pure enjoyment without exception, always accompanied by the feeling which may be compared best with the incredible speed-up of a motorbike or high-powered muscle car. But while this always involves howling engines, the Synästecs stay relaxed at all times. This is a remarkable authority for an amplifier, which also manifests itself by the fact that turning up the volume knob does not necessarily make things »louder«.

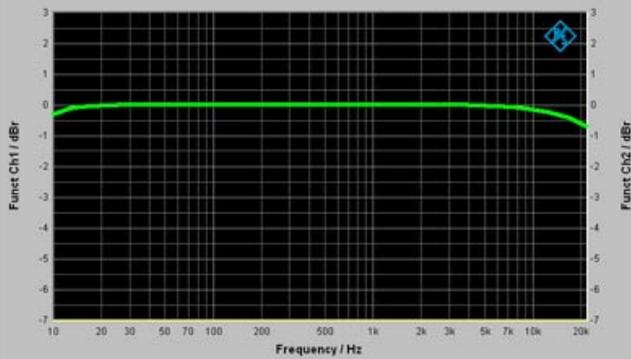
With »The Sound Of Muzak« by Porcupine Tree we're heading off into the listening sessions. Finally drummer Gavin Harrison's work gets all the attention it deserves. This good guy is really toiling behind his drumkit – but with average amps no one will ever take notice. With Synästec Audio things are quite different: Dry, brute and with drive the piece is now moving ahead. It's interesting to note that, for once, the groove doesn't fall by the wayside at the cost of the high-end typical precision. This is by no means an intellectual jingle-jangle, manoeuvring tenderly through the guitar jungle as well, but an emotional bravado which is flawlessly carving out the message from the music.

Now let's go on with Anathema and their track »Untouchable, Part 2«. Starting with soft piano chords and a male voice, the Synästec team spans the room wider and clearer than any other combination before. Fascinating, too, the presentation of the female voice (from 1:46), which unfolds in an incredible clarity and at the same time gentleness. When finally bass and drums join in, we get an impression of the power that lies in the Volatus. The tone played by the bass is dwelling deep and doesn't lose energy as otherwise customary.

Acoustic renovation of old pieces

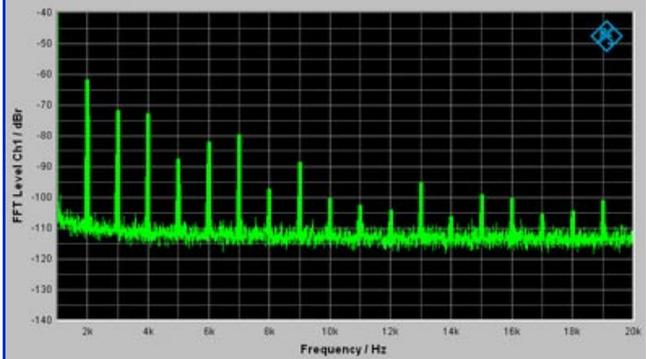
Precisely this listening conclusion was suggested by »Brush With The Blues« by Jeff Beck in the live version, for the piece begins with an extremely low bass, followed by

Frequenzgang: Synästec Audio Volatus



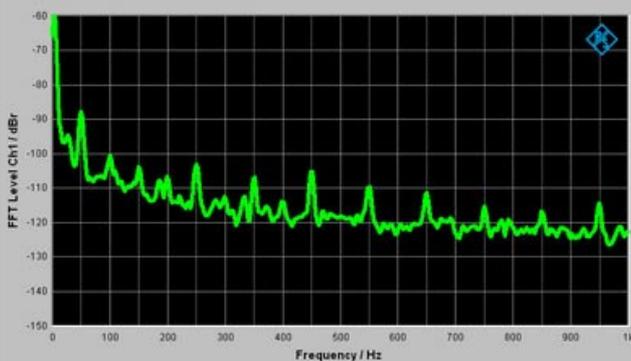
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Klirrspektrum: Synästec Audio Volatus



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Störspektrum: Synästec Audio Volatus



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Lab report

Power:

Nominal output power @ 4 ohms (1% THD): 362 W

Nominal output power @ 8 ohms (1% THD): 200 W

Gain factor: 26.3 dB / 20.6-fold

Distortions:

Distortion factor (THD+N, 10 watts @ 4 ohms): 0.010 %

IM distortions SMPTE (5 watts @ 4 ohms): 0.048 %

IM distortions CCIF (5 watts @ 4 ohms): 0.0025%

Signal-to-noise ratios:

External voltage (- 250 kHz): -69.2 dB

Noise voltage (A-weighted): -109.5 dB

Others:

Upper frequency limit (-3dB / 10 W @ 4 ohms): 50 kHz

Sensitivity (full scale 4 ohms): 1.85 V

Input impedance: 149 kohms

Power consumption:

Standby: 13 W

Idle state: 25 W



Facts

Dimensions (B x H x D): 40 x 9 x 31 cm
(15.75 x 3.5 x 12.25 in.)

Weight: 19 kg (42 lbs)

Price: 26,000 EUR

Warranty: 3 years

Contact:

Synästec Audiosysteme GmbH

Veilchenweg 1

72479 Strassberg

Internet: www.synaestec-audio.de

E-mail: info@synaestec-audio.de