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# SA Equipment

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**Soulution 530 Integrated Amplifier**

Deeper background, excellent speaker control and something elusive that makes me desire in anticipation for the next track!

Review By Wojciech Pacula

It was a beautiful winter day. All the houses in sight, all the trees, the streets, the sidewalks and most people sneaking by were covered with soft, powdery snow. Exactly at high noon a courier knocked on my door, package in his hand. Within a few minutes I worked my way through the packaging to hold in my hands the latest Swiss masterpiece from Soulution, a Series5 integrated amplifier, the 530. A few more minutes to plug it in my system and I could happily fly away, listening to perfectly produced CDs faithfully rendering the artistic intentions of all involved people.

I really wish it had happened that way! It would have made a perfect intro to this review, matching the amplifier design and nicely harmonizing its sound. Life, however, has that annoying habit of making things not quite as we dreamed them to be and showing us our place in the scheme of this world. The day was actually anything but remarkable – melting snow, lots of water in the streets, heavy wet snowflakes falling from the trees, lugging the amplifier to the third floor (an exercise after which both myself and the courier could not come round for a good while), my subsequent struggle to get the almost cubic ninety-pound lump out of the box and a long burn-in time to be able to say I know what it's all about – that was how it looked in reality.

Fortunately, two things straightened out almost immediately: the next day I woke up in a white scenery, exactly as described in the first paragraph (please look at the photo – that's the view from my window) and after firing off the 530 I did almost immediately fly away. Apparently sometimes we get what we dream of, perhaps in a slightly different form than the one we imagined or at another time, but we get it nevertheless. All it takes is to really want it and believe it. And not to sit down on our butts but do something to make it happen.

The audio industry is a world of stereotypes and prejudices (Editor Steven's Note: *No way, you don't say? Sarcasm anyone?*). The latter are disgusting and although time and time again I notice I still hang on to them, I believe I will someday reach the point where I can say, I'm through. Stereotypes, on the other hand, while seemingly equally absurd, have their internal logic and are part of something bigger, something we use every day. I could naturally refer to a dictionary definition but instead let me quote a statement by Anna Grodzka, Polish first transsexual MP and a candidate for Deputy Speaker of the Polish Parliament (she unfortunately lost in a recent vote), that perfectly illustrates my point. In a weekly TV program hosted by Tomasz Lis, one of the most influential Polish journalists, she did not dissociate herself from various stereotypes concerning her person but said that stereotypes help us quickly find ourselves in a particular situation and are not bad in themselves; quite the contrary, they are useful. The problem begins when we conform to them instead of moving on; when we give up thinking and reduce ourselves to a given stereotype. That is dangerous.

We got used to the fact that the audio world is the domain of engineers-visionaries, kind of God's Madmen. The so-called 'yurodiviy' (Rus. юродивый), i.e. a holy fool, a mad saint is a very popular theme in the Russian culture. We may not formulate it directly but what we expect of the designer is a vision, not looking back to the constraints; we demand a constant breaking of the existing patterns and formulas, unpredictable actions, not touching us directly but reaching us through an appropriate "filter". And indeed, that's how many manufacturers began their adventure with audio, slogging away alone in their tiny workshops, honing to perfection their ideas or someone else's whose potential had not been sufficiently realized. Many of them never grew out of that but some went a step further, becoming small, specialized manufacturers. An advantage of such approach is a highly personalized product, usually intended for a specific customer, with a distinctive design and a "message" behind it. A disadvantage is a (surprisingly!) relatively low innovation – technological advances require large or very large sums of money. Something classic high-end audio manufacturers are usually short on. Recent years, however, saw the emergence of a group of manufacturers completely defying that stereotype by the very basis of their existence – see Continuum Audio Labs, Constellation, Magico, dCS. Brought to life by engineers and designers with vast funds, they offered audio components and speakers that could never be manufactured in a garage, even if it were a Bugatti Veyron

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garage. The manufacturers offered the kind of sound comparable to what had earlier been available only from tiny, specialized companies.

That group of manufacturers would not be complete without mentioning Soudlution from Switzerland. It is a relatively young company – established in 2005 – but within just a few years its products won high-end audio global market. Two years after its debut at High End Show in Munich Soudlution was already a star. The brand is owned by Spemot AG, a corporation headquartered in Dulliken, Switzerland, and specializing for the last 56 years in manufacturing of motors and electromechanical components for industrial automation as well as motors and servo-motors for the automotive industry (BMW, Volkswagen, SAAB).



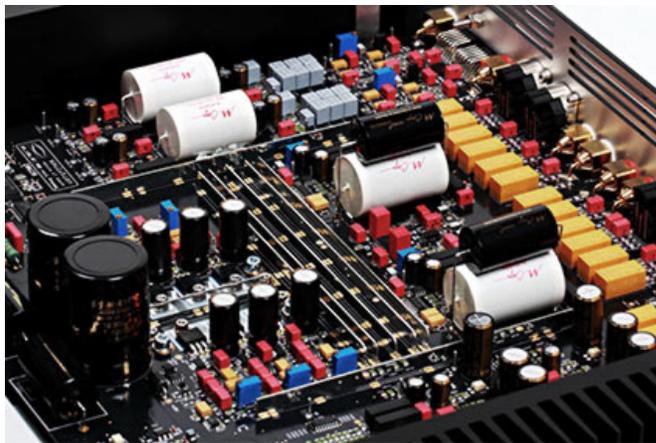
The decision to get Spemot, a company employing high-class engineers and having an extensive R&D department, involved in music reproduction business was made by two people: Cyrill Hammer and Roland Manz, both engineers and avowed music lovers, apparently outspoken enough to convince the parent company to back them up with significant funds. These were needed in order to come up with something completely different to everyone else, to make Soudlution something more than another "me too" company. It was perhaps easier in so far as Cyrill Hammer was a majority shareholder of Spemot, having taken over the company from his late father, Erich Hammer, although in a world ruled by economic interests it did not necessarily need to work in his favor. After his father died in 1999, Cyrill bought all his shares as well as the shares of retired managers and currently controls 90% of the shares which naturally helps in taking strategic decisions.

One of such decisions was buying the brand name Audiolabor whose products had earlier been distributed in Switzerland by Cyrill and Roland. Recognizing its great potential, in 2000 the gentlemen bought the Audiolabor brand name as well as some of its newer product designs and proprietary technologies.

Soudlution first and most important product, its pride and glory, are power amplifiers – the 700 monoblocks and their stereo version, the 710. Since Soudlution is an "engineer driven" company, the choice of solid-state design was not accidental. From the beginning the gentlemen planned that they would first design a device with the best possible measurable parameters and then confront it with listening sessions. The result was an amplifier with incredible parameters: 0 Hz to 800 kHz bandwidth, damping factor over 10,000, minimal distortion and extremely high dynamic range. In order to achieve that they resorted to an age-old patent (declared by Luxman to be its idea), namely the negative feedback.

Push-pull class AB amplifier is particularly vulnerable to a few, well-defined types of distortion, the most troublesome of which are those associated with transition through zero, with the thermal drift of amplification circuits and with power supply efficiency. The last problem is the easiest to solve but at the same time the most expensive. In class AB amplifiers power consumption is not constant and is proportional to input voltage. Therefore, one of design assumptions is that since the circuit will very rarely be driven to maximum output power; the power supply section can be downsized, reducing the size of transformers, capacitors, etc. Soudlution uses power supplies several times in excess of the maximum power consumption. The latest amplifier, the 530 integrated, employs a switching-mode power supply.

Another design objective has been that the problem is not negative feedback per se but its inertia. Consequently, Soudlution designed circuits with extremely fast slew rate, with a signal path few centimeters long from input to output, ready for ultra-wide bandwidth (and here even the shape of paths, their violation, etc., matters) with such fast response time that the listener is not able to make out the delay resulting from negative feedback loop. As the NF-induced phase shift is frequency dependent, it is adjusted accordingly in the Swiss amps. To further reduce delays, local negative feedback loops has been applied to individual stages (there are three in power amplifier – two buffers and a gain stage). In keeping with other Soudlution designs, the 530 amplifier features very low global negative feedback loop (0.1 dB). The amplifier was also tested with no global negative feedback, however, the tests showed that very low feedback resulted in a slightly superior sound and helped long term stability issues.



As you can see, Soudlution breaks away from all stereotypes. It "passes over" sacred audiophile principles. Also when it comes to external design. The 530 integrated amplifier looks like a lab machine, maybe a furnace or perhaps a nuclear fuel generator – in any case as a high tech device. The company's devices are often compared to Calvin Klein's designs due to extraordinary purity of line and simplicity of design with extra added details not imposing but rather highlighting it.



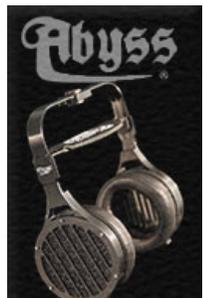
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In case of the reviewed amplifier it is mainly about its body: an aluminum block with a silver front, back, top, and bottom and black sides. The 350 mm high (!) front panel features a display window near its left upper corner with three buttons next to it and a small rotary control knob further right, in the center. And that's it. The red dot-matrix display has two lines and indicates the selected input and current volume level; on entering the menu we can additionally select input names and set starting parameters such as initial volume level and default input, display brightness, and others. The rear panel is not too crowded, either, but please keep in mind that we're talking about a 350 x 448 mm area. Close to the upper edge – which seems to indicate the location of the preamplifier section – we can see input connectors: four line inputs (two balanced XLRs and two unbalanced RCAs), a Phono input with DIP switches and two pairs of pre-outs. Placed below are two pairs of binding posts. They are widely spaced and sport great caps.



In a small bag found in the packaging there is also an additional set of transparent acrylic caps. They were used throughout listening tests. The rear panel also features a mains socket with a mechanical switch and LINK-System ports used to communicate with other Soulution devices. Both amplifier sides are completely covered by huge heatsinks. Although they get quite warm to touch after a few hours, they never exceed the rated temperature. As I said before, distortions and their elimination is the "pet subject" of Soulution engineers. One of the major problems concerns temperature change of the electronic components. Swiss amplifiers are equipped with advanced logic circuitry to maintain constant temperature – hence the large heatsinks and a fan to further cool down the interior, if necessary. The fan does not stop immediately after the unit is turned off, additionally cooling down transistors and capacitors (they are most susceptible) so that they maintain their properties as long as possible. Indeed, it is a device designed to work for many, many years without any performance deterioration.



The 530 has dimensions of 350 x 448 x 442 (HxWxD in mm), weighs around 90 pounds and delivers up to 125 W at 8 Ohm, 250 W at 4 Ohms and 500 W at 2 Ohm, thus acting as an ideal current source. The amplifier's finish is fantastic – no bolts in sight, perfect components fit. The whole unit is an extremely rigid, vibration-resistant block that will likely outlive more than one owner. External design may not appeal to everyone but it is timeless. Fashions come and go, and simplicity remains.

### Mini-Interview With Mr. Cyrill Hammer

**Wojciech Pacula:** What exactly is the new Series5 for Soulution?

**Cyrill Hammer:** The Series5 is a step down from the reference line products of Series7. So the challenge for all those products was to preserve as much of the sonic qualities of the Series7 as possible while bringing down the cost. The basic concepts regarding negative feedback control, the bandwidth of the products and the importance of the power supply design did not change. However, we had to adapt the technologies from the higher product line.

**How is it different from the Series7?**

In terms of amplifiers the Series5 is smaller than the Series7. There are "only" 5 transistors per side (PNP & NPN) in the output of the 501 monoblocks or the 530 integrated amplifier whereas the Series7 amplifier have 7 transistors. The RMS power rating of the two Series is about the same but the Series7 amps do have higher peak current ratings.

**How exactly does the 530 power section differ from the one in my 710 power amp?**

In the Series5 we do use switched mode power supply units for the amplifiers (the 501 and the 530). This technology has the advantage of regulated output voltages for the amplifier sections. Under load conditions (loudspeaker tearing current) the supply voltage remains perfectly stable. This was not the case with the Series7 products where we use big toroid transformers. The sonic difference is impressive. Having the superior technology in the power supply allowed us to downsize the amplifier itself without losing sound quality.

**Who is responsible for exterior design?**

Greutmann Bolzern Designstudio, Zurich. This is the same designer we have worked with for the Series7 products. The exterior design received the "red dot design award 2012 Best of the Best". This means it earned the best design award in 2012 in the category of consumer electronics and cameras.

**Why the XLR input is not exactly twice that of the RCA input in terms of input impedance? What does it mean?**

In fact the data in the user manual and the web are (were) not accurate. This value has been changed in the

production and is 3 kOhm for the XLR and the RCA input.

#### Any additional interesting facts?

The 530 consists of a top grade preamplifier and two mono amplifier channels combined in one housing. To our knowledge this has not been done so far on this level of perfection. The 530 is a true Souldution product without any compromises.

#### Why did we have to wait since 2011 (Munich) for the 530 to appear on the market?

We announced the 530 in May 2011. However, while working with the prototypes we did realize that the preamplifier section was not good enough and did not fulfill our expectations. Consequently, we decided to restart from scratch. Unfortunately, this took more time than expected, mainly due to the fact that we had to exchange our design team. As you may know Christoph [Christoph Schürmann, former Souldution chief engineer] does not work for us anymore. He had to be replaced by a new engineer [Bonne Dittmar] who was able to run the projects according to our expectations. Of course this took some time as well.

#### Is the 530 DC-coupled, as is the 720 preamp?

The 520 and 530 are *not* DC-coupled. In the 720 we do have an automatic DC offset detection with relays switching the capacitor. As we could not detect any difference in the sonic performance, we decided to have the capacitor in the signal path all the time for the Series5 products.

## Design

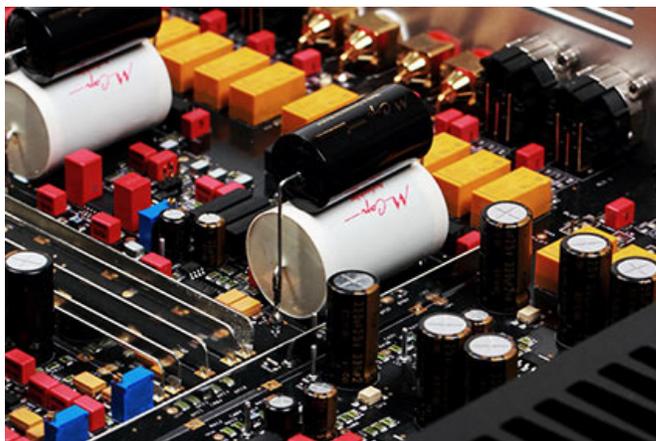
The amplifier external design is the work of Greutmann Bolzern Designstudio from Zurich. The design received the "red dot design award 2012 Best of the Best" in the category "Entertainment technology and cameras". It will not appeal to everyone. The amplifier is massive and does not look like an audio component. Its faceplate is almost empty, except for the volume control knob, display and three buttons. So is the rear panel. We control the amp with a small remote control unit included with all pre-amps and SACD players from that manufacturer.

The device has been designed in such a way as to constitute a compact, rigid unit. It consists of aluminum plates on the outside, huge radiators on the sides and various screens inside, separating different sections from each other. The whole sits on specially designed feet. They feature two aluminum discs with three steel balls inserted between them – similar to CeraPuc feet from Finite Elemente. I am in favor of a rigid connection between individual components, just like one of my masters, Mr. Ken Ishigura, the owner of Acoustic Revive who I met last November at the Audio Show 2012 in Warsaw. Engineers from Souldution apparently think likewise.



The interior is divided into three horizontal sections. The top two house the preamplifier and power amplifiers, and the largest bottom section is the power supply. The preamplifier is mounted on one large printed circuit board, including both voltage controllers as well as line and phono sections. The circuit is built on Analog Devices AD797 and Burr Brown OPA627 (phono section), and transistors and Burr Brown OPA 627 (line section). Relay switches are used to select the active input from whence the signal is sent to a very sophisticated volume control system. This fully discreet system uses high-precision, low-noise metal foil resistors switched by reed relays – the best components of that kind, sadly, very rarely seen. They can also be found in McIntosh and ASR. They guarantee a long service life. To avoid switching noise, the system has been paralleled by the classical Burr Brown PGA2320 resistor ladder. At the time of volume level change the Burr Brown is switched in the signal path and the discrete circuit is used to select volume level in the "background". Ultra-purist design but it makes sense.

The circuit is coupled via capacitors. A prototype had used Mundorf M-CAM MKP but in the unit I received they were bypassed with beautiful Mundorf M-Cap Supreme Silver/Gold/Oil, in other words, oil capacitors. Phono preamp section looks equally impressive: it employs Evox capacitors and more Mundorf MKP as coupling capacitors. Pre-amp power supply section is very complex. DC power is regulated in the bottom section of the device housing the switched-mode power supply but the final rectification, filtering and stabilization takes place on the preamplifier main PCB. The power supply section employs Mundorf M-Lytic AG+ capacitors and discrete voltage controllers on the ON transistors.



Power amplifier section is placed directly below. It is a fully solid-state dual-mono design. Unfortunately, I was unable to get to it so I do not know exactly how it is built. What is known is that it uses five pairs of bipolar transistors per channel in the current amplification stage.

The bottom section houses four huge 600 W cutting-edge switched-mode power supply units, capable of delivering 2400 W. It is divided into two parts – voltage regulation and rectification and filtering. It seems that the preamplifier has a separate power supply, additionally shielded. The manufacturer quotes a total of nine power supply units in the 530, optimized for their specific functions. The power supplies for digital and audio circuits are electrically isolated from each other by optocouplers and transformers.

The unit is designed and built to work and sound the same in 10, 20 or more years. No expense was spared on passive components. The amplifier uses proprietary solutions which the Soudation engineers are convinced of: switched-mode power supplies, deep local negative feedback, signal coupling via capacitors and an interesting volume control system. With the 530 we not only get outstanding sound but equally outstanding performance.

### Audition And Overall Sound

Since we have talked about stereotypes, let us recall another one: solid-state sounds cold and clinical. Hence, in opposition to them, tubes sound "human". Nonsense? But of course: I have heard a lot more dispassionate, sterile tube amps than such sounding solid-state amps. I would therefore say that it is probably a matter of prejudice. The more so as I know Soudation amplifiers inside out: for the last two years I have been using the 710 power amplifier in my audio system. The last thing I would do is to call it bright, cold, sterile or devoid of feelings. No, the truth is different: Soudation amplifiers enhance the own character of the speakers they drive. The Harbeth M40.1 show slightly stronger mid-bass and smoother treble, the Amphion Krypton3 demonstrate brilliant soundstage and a rather light bass fundament, and the EstelonXA are creamy and ultra-fast. I think that we may face problems when something is not "quite right" with the speakers; if there is a flaw/characteristic masked by other amplifiers.

The 530 is different still. Its sound is creamy, silky and not as defined or selective as the 710. As if the new team of designers (see the above mini-interview) focused on its compatibility with the widest possible range of speakers. As always, it entails consequences since it is ultimately a compromise; what's important, however, is whether basic design objectives have been achieved.

A massive amplifier's body, its power supply capable of running a small welder, heatsinks and the cooling fan able to dissipate heat from a large heater, they all suggest a large mass of sound, an avalanche of bass and its full, even exaggerated, control. That is how stereotypes get translated into expectations. In this case it fails flat – the integrated amp from Switzerland sounds nothing like that. It is not contoured or "mighty". Bass extension is not as deep as the 710 nor its differentiation so puzzling (I say 'puzzling' as it invokes the question: why all other devices average this element?).

The very core of this presentation is absolute calmness. That type of "self-confidence" is a sophisticated expression of full control over presentation, over the speakers and the source. Such is the result of the advantages I discussed earlier; so manifests itself the extremely high damping factor. How that translates into music? In several ways. One of them is incredibly black background, a black silk screen with instruments bodies displayed on it; displayed in 3D and on an IMAX scale to boot. The role of this background needs to be fully understood and properly appreciated because what the 530 does with music is absolutely unique, even better than the 710 paired with the top 720 preamplifier I once tested.



In such case as this we sit in front of the speakers and stop thinking in terms of "more, deeper, further away" because music starts to interest us as an event happening before our eyes, constantly developing and unpredictable. Indeed, the unpredictability of musical act is one of the major advantages of this amplifier. Well-known recordings take on deeper meanings; new ones (even not very successful, as the new Depeche Mode single "Heaven") build up suspense like a good thriller.

More examples? The very first is Tomasz Stańko album *Lontano*. It so happened that just at the time of this review the Polish trumpeter released his new album titled "Wisława". Dedicated to the memory of the Polish poet who died a year ago, Nobel Prize winner, it was released on the Munich label ECM. We all know the "ECM sound", don't we? When we have low-cost audio systems it seems incredibly precise, resounding, with great space; perhaps slightly bright. With each audio system upgrade it proves more and more "meaty", with lots of connective tissue and filling. Eventually, when we reach real high-end (in terms of sound quality, not the money spent) it suddenly hits us right in the face: it is a warm, extremely deep sound. Precise? – Yes! Spatial? – Sure it is! But at the same time saturated with harmonics in the way almost no one else can do (today).

I did not yet have the "Wisława" album but I held in my hand tickets to a Stańko (who, incidentally, owns quite a nice audio system) concert promoting it. I was looking forward to what the artist called "masterful playing" in an interview in the Polish edition of "Newsweek":

*Already in the studio the producer told me that it is a real bomb, so ECM decided to release a double album, which doesn't often happen anymore for commercial reasons. But even I am surprised here with every sound. This is masterful playing because I have great musicians.* (Sebastian Łupak, "Manhattan Transfer", Newsweek 6/2013).

For the time being, however, I was listening to "Lontano". The audition was on the one hand comforting and on the other exciting. The comfort lied in the fact that after only a few minutes I knew that this amp would not

create nor permit any problems with treble, with sibilants. Its creamy presentation makes the attack somewhat rounded, slightly modified. Typically, this is achieved by withdrawing treble or warming up midrange. Both are distortion. I do not know what exactly hides behind the sound I heard from the 530 but I welcome it with interest and appreciation. All the more so as – I repeat – it's not treble being rolled up. The bell striking at the beginning of J.S. Bach's "Toccatina in D Minor" released by the Japanese magazine "MJ Technical" on its compilation Vol. 6 shook me, rocked my room and probably half of my neighbors. Certainly my downstairs neighbor, a poet, Mr. Adam Ziemianin who kind of looked deep into my eyes the next day, apparently searching for my remorse....

Anyway, listening to Stańko's trumpet I was presented with huge soundstage, incredibly deep and black, better than the one I know from live music. Naturally, I know that being at a concert is the highest form of communion with music but I also know that the recording is a completely new world, created by a number of people, and that it often presents a world that is more attractive than what we can hear live. And I know Stańko from many situations as I do the trumpet – both from the concerts I mixed as well as from the studio where I recorded it many times. It will never be as silky live as on the best recordings, which the 530 showed with grace and ease only a few amplifiers are capable of. It was a real *event*, being created before my eyes. I know this album inside out, back and forth, and I like it, but I here waited with great interest for the next sounds, phrases, tracks.



It was similar with Simone Kermes recordings. She is a soprano with a voice moving me to the very bottom of my soul. I vividly remember her performance during the last year's MisteriaPaschalia festival in Krakow and I just hold in my hand tickets (yes, I have lots of tickets...) for this year's Misteria. Accompanied by Venice Baroque Orchestra she even trumped Fabio Biondi with Europa Galante and Jordi Savall appearing on the same stage, though I'm a huge fan of them all. Kermes, however, was phenomenal. No album can convey even half of what she presents live.

While the example of Stańko proved that the Soudution amplifier can show something unique, absent even in live performance, that is intimate closeness without problems arising from getting close physically to the instrument (here, the trumpet), which is not always pleasant, Kermes recordings, such as those from the album "Handel. Arias for Cuzzoni", signaled another ability: organizing the presentation. Classical recordings, with large orchestration, are usually shown from a distance. Since it is not possible to convey all the components that make up the live sound, the presentation is usually "constructed" from smaller components. Soudution brought order to all of them, introducing incredible calmness to the sound; not the kind of calm resulting from quieting down of presentation but from an internal "spring", controlling everything from behind the scenes and removing from us a requirement to listen to the recording more closely than we do during a live performance. It was outstanding!

As I said, the new Swiss amp sounds a bit different than the Series7. The new sound brings some elements I now find missing in the 710. In this respect it behaves as an absolute high-end two-piece design, not an integrated amp. Such calm in presentation, such disappearing from the process, leaving us face to face with the performer/performers, has usually been the domain of expensive tube designs. Solid-state did not seem capable of that.

As with any product, it is possible to identify some elements that other manufacturers do differently; sometimes better. Granted, you will need to pay more money or will have to agree to other trade-offs, but what we need to know is what kind of compromises they are. There is no such thing as "uncompromising" product; the designer always has to choose between, often conflicting, values.

In the case of the 530 it is primarily a slightly lower resolution than the 710, 300B single-ended tube amplifiers, or the Accuphase A-200. Higher series Soudution amplifiers are truly unique in that regard and I have never ever heard anything like that from solid-state devices. The reviewed integrated amp thus faced very high standards. It coped incredibly well and to be honest I did not miss anything. It's a part of a larger whole, which means that the amplifier will be a perfect fit for almost any system and will comfortably drive nearly every speaker. Its power output and current efficiency allow driving everything that moves, while its color and the way it treats musical material will grip our hearts, also with speakers regarded to be bright and "light".

However, one must be also prepared that the presentation will be creamier than and not as dynamic as the Series7 models. It will still be outstanding dynamics and stunning transparency, especially for an integrated amplifier, but in direct comparison against more expensive equipment one cannot miss that. Low bass, as I said, is a bit rounded and not as resolved as I got used to with the 710. And again, no tube amp, regardless of its power output, is able to combine such calm of presentation of double bass, the piano, bass guitar, with musicality. Similarly, no integrated amplifier, regardless of the technology. Best solid-state amps such as the Soudution 710 or the A-200 monoblocks from Accuphase simply do it better, best there is.

## Conclusion

A comparison is a very handy tool that allows to direct attention of the message recipient. We tend to think in patterns; in our daily experience we refer to what we remember and understand, so let me use a comparison. It will be easier in that the 530 from Swiss Soudution easily lends itself to such an analysis. In general, it is unlike anything I have ever heard; in details it shows surprising similarity to various types of equipment,

sometimes to specific brands and models.

General tonal balance closely reminds me of what I heard from the D-Premier AIR digital amplifier on the one hand, and the Tenor Audio 175T hybrid amp on the other. It is silk, dark background, slightly softened sound attack. The 530 is, however, better from both these devices in its deeper background, better speaker control and something elusive that makes us wait in anticipation for the next track even if we know the album very well. The dynamics is similar to the Accuphase A-200 and the Souolution 710.

The above two are the best solid-state amplifiers I know. They have a little deeper bass extension; they are a bit more defined and selective and better differentiate color and instruments bodies. Please take note, however, that we are talking about power amplifiers that are more expensive than the reviewed amplifier which is, after all, an integrated design! In other words, we compare a two times more expensive pre/power system against an integrated amplifier. I do not know any other integrated amplifier at this level that could present its point of view so consistently, present – with great success(!) – its own interpretation of what it receives from the source.

### Specifications

Type: Integrated stereo solid-state amplifier  
Frequency Response: DC to 800 kHz  
Power Output: 125 wpc @ 8 Ohms (250 @ 4 Ohms)  
Gain: -31 to +42 dB  
Slew rate: 900 ns  
THD+N: < 0.001%  
Damping Factor: > 10,000  
Signal-to-noise ratio: > 120 dB  
Crosstalk: < 120 dB  
Input impedance (XLR/RCA): 3 kOhm  
Power (at 8/4/2 Ohm): 125/250/500 W  
Output Current: 45 Ampere  
Dimensions: 350 x 442 x 448 (HxWxD in mm)  
Weight: 40 kg  
Price: \$49,000

### Company Information

Souolution  
c/oSpemot AG  
Industriestrasse 70  
CH-4657 Dulliken

Voice: +41 62 285 30 40  
Fax: +41 62 295 52 02  
E-mail: [info@souolution-audio.com](mailto:info@souolution-audio.com)  
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