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JASON VICTOR SERINUS

Accuphase A-300

STEREO/MONO POWER AMPLIFIER

One of the finest chamber music performances I have ever attended took place this past August under far from ideal circumstances. The venue was one-month-old Field Hall in Port Angeles, Washington, a city of fewer than 20,000 people known more for its port and proximity to the Olympic National Forest than for its rich culture. Perhaps that reputation will soon change, because the performers in the concluding concert of the Music on the Strait¹ chamber music festival included its two local founders, violinist James Garlick of the Minnesota Orchestra and violist Richard O'Neill, the newest member of the Takács String Quartet. These excellent musicians, who have been friends since high school, were joined by the superb pianist Jeremy Denk and cellist Ani Aznavoorian.² These are world-class musicians who attract eager audiences to New York's 92nd Street Y and Carnegie Hall, London's Wigmore Hall, and other prestigious venues.

From orchestra level—even from row C—Field Hall's acoustics favored the midrange, shortchanged treble brilliance, and truncated reverberation: good for talks and theatre, not so good for unamplified music. Also problematic was the piano, a Steinway D that lacked warmth and richness because it was still recovering from a player piano mechanism-ectomy.



These shortcomings mattered not once the music started. The program consisted of compositions by the three members of the love triangle of Clara Schumann, Robert Schumann, and Johannes Brahms. The performances were so heartfelt, so filled with poetic give and take, that the greatness of music and artistry transcended the limitations of both hall and piano.

What was true for that live performance in Field Hall is also

¹ See Musiconthestrat.com.

² The week before, the Takács String Quartet and pianist Garrick Ohlsson opened the festival.

SPECIFICATIONS

Description Solid state, class-A (into 8 ohms) mono power amplifier. Inputs: one each balanced (XLR), single-ended (RCA). Output: 2 pairs loudspeaker binding posts per channel, RCA and XLR outputs for bridging and biamping. Rated output power: 125W into 8 ohms, 250W into 4 ohms, 500W into 2 ohms, 1000W into 1 ohm (all 21dBW). Frequency response: 20Hz–20kHz (+0, –0.2dB) at full rated power; 0.5Hz–

160kHz (+0, –3dB) at 1W. Input impedance: 40k ohms balanced; 20k ohms single-ended. Signal/noise ratio (A-weighted, input shorted): 130dB with Gain switch set to MAX, 135dB with gain switch set to –12dB. Guaranteed output noise voltage: 10µV. THD (20Hz–20kHz, 4–16 ohm load): 0.03%. Distortion: 0.01%. Damping factor: 1000 or greater. Gain: 28dB, 25dB, 22dB, 16dB. Input sensitivity: 1.26V for full rated output,

0.11V for 1W output. Standby power consumption: 230W, 0.3W in Eco Mode.

Dimensions 18.31" (465mm) W × 20.28" (515mm) D × 9.45" (240mm) H. Weight: 101.5lb (46kg); shipping weight: 122lb (55kg).

Finish Gold faceplate on black housing.

Serial numbers of units reviewed L2Y187, L2Y188.

Designed and built in Japan. **Price** \$51,900/pair. Approximate number of US dealers:

22. Warranty: 3 years, parts and labor.

Manufacturer Accuphase Laboratory Inc., 2-14-10 Shin-ishikawa, Aobaku Yokohama 225-8508, Japan. Tel: +81 45 901 2770. Web: accuphase.com. US distributor: AXISS Audio USA, 2190 Nolensville Pike, Suite C, Nashville, TN 37211. Tel: (615) 419-1522. Email: sales@axissaudio.com. Web: axissaudio.com.

true for performances reproduced on audio systems: A system can be less than technically perfect yet still transmit with eloquence every iota of care and feeling that artists and engineers put into recordings. Perfection is not an essential component of musical truth. Inspiration is.

Lest readers think this preamble is intended to suggest some shortcoming in the component under review, the Accuphase A-300 monophonic power amplifier (\$51,900/pair), let me reassure you at the outset: Time and again, the A-300, like Jeremy Denk's artistry, inspired a state of wonder. The more I listened to the A-300 monoblocks, the more I *wanted* to listen. In my too-busy life, every occasion for listening was an occasion indeed, a special event.



Inside

“To reduce noise is very important to sound reproduction. We’ve been pursuing reducing noise throughout Accuphase’s 51-year history. So, after the A-250 monoblock was released in 2017, we redesigned it all over again.” So spoke Takaya Inokuma, Accuphase’s director of engineering, near the start of a four-person Zoom chat that also included Accuphase International Marketing Manager Kohei Nishigawa and Axiss Audio USA’s new owner, Cliff Duffey.

“Before we tune a component’s sound, it is very important to make the performance perfect,” Inokuma said. “First, we focus on the performance—on noise, speaker driving ability, and so on—and adjust as necessary. After all that is complete, we start to tune the sound to our ideal. We don’t listen to amplifiers from other manufacturers; instead, we listen to the latest Accuphase model so we can better it and better reproduce the dynamism, intonation, and emotion of music.

“All music is the same. It’s not just sound. All music has atmosphere. There’s something the performer wants to tell the audience. The challenge of audio is how to transfer those kinds of feelings to listeners. That is the most important thing.

“Ensemble is also very important. In live performance, performers try to breathe together before the first sound comes out. That inhalation is very important for an Accuphase amplifier. We try to revive that kind of atmosphere—the timing of what happens just before the sound comes out. It’s not a case of which amplifier has more bass or less bass or sounds ‘better’; instead it’s about how to transmit the emotion, the atmosphere, and the feelings to the listeners.”

Inokuma oversees all aspects of Accuphase’s engineering, design, and development; Nishigawa described him as Accuphase’s “Sound Master.” So he was the best person to ask how the company tunes

MEASUREMENTS

I performed a complete set of measurements on one of the Accuphase A-300s (serial number L2Y188) in its Normal mode with my Audio Precision SYS2722 system.¹ I preconditioned the A-300 by following the CEA’s recommendation of running it at one-eighth the specified power into 8 ohms for 30 minutes. At the end of that time, the temperature of the top panel was 97.6°F (36.4°C) and that of the side-mounted heatsinks 120.4°F (49.1°C).

As auditioned by JVS, the balanced input was wired with pin 2 negative, the opposite of the AES standard. (A rear-panel switch allows it to be changed to pin 2 positive.) In the default position, therefore, the Accuphase’s balanced input inverted absolute polarity, though this is easily changed. The single-ended Line input was noninverting. The A-300’s balanced input impedance is specified as 40k ohms. I measured 39.6k

ohms at 20Hz and 1kHz, 14.8k ohms at 20kHz. The single-ended input impedance, specified as 20k ohms, was 19.3k ohms at 20Hz and 1kHz but 5k ohms at 20kHz. With the gain set to MAX, the voltage gain at 1kHz into 8 ohms with both input types

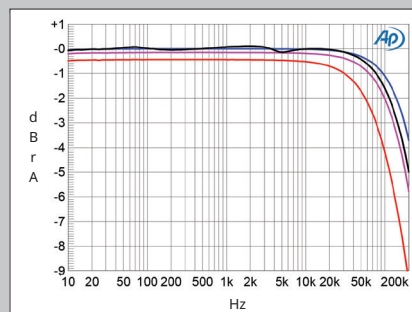


Fig.1 Accuphase A-300, frequency response at 2.83V into: simulated loudspeaker load (gray), 8 ohms (blue), 4 ohms (magenta), and 2 ohms (red) (1dB/vertical div.).

was close to the specified 28dB, at 27.83dB. The three lower gain settings lowered the voltage gain by 3dB, 6dB, and 12dB, respectively.

¹ See stereophile.com/content/measurements-maps-precision.

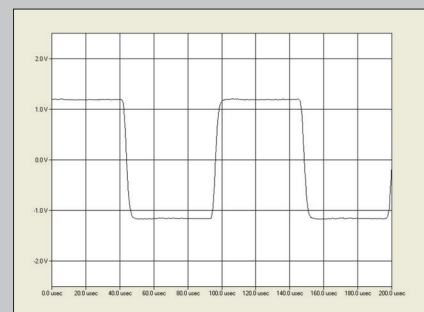


Fig.2 Accuphase A-300, small-signal 10kHz square-wave into 8 ohms.

the sound of its products. First, Inokuma focuses on capacitors. “Capacitors are the most sensitive parts that influence sound quality,” he said. “Changing caps is the easiest way to change and control the sound. We have a lot of capacitors in the A-300. Changing the filtering capacitor has the most effect on sound quality. We use many types of filtering capacitors, from many different companies. For example, the big capacitor in the amp is custom-made. We discuss with the manufacturer what we want to hear, and we try different capacitors with different values and sleeves until we get it right.”

The A-300’s output specs are impressive. The monoblock outputs 125W into 8 ohms and doubles down each time the impedance halves: 250W into 4 ohms, 500W into 2 ohms, 1000W into 1 ohm. “Its performance is extremely linear,” Inokuma said. “With a speaker like the Alexia V, whose nominal impedance is 4 ohms, the first 60 or so watts is pure class-A.”

Accuphase’s literature describes the A-300 as a class-A amplifier—so why is class-A limited to the first 60W? I asked *Stereophile* Technical Editor John Atkinson to explain. “The Accuphase is what I would call a ‘high-bias’ class-AB amplifier. With such high power, running it in true class-A up to the clipping point into low impedances would be impractical, as the heatsinks would have to be the size of a house.”

I also wrote to Duffey, who relayed the question to Inokuma and forwarded his response. “Here are our thoughts and technical approach to the question. For a push-pull output stage using a bipolar transistor as the output device, it operates as class-A up to twice the idling current flowing to the output device when the output is zero. If more than this amount of current flows through the speaker, one of the output devices, operating as a +/- pair, will turn off. Of course, current can be supplied to the outputs without any problem, and this is called class-AB amplification.

“In the case of the A-300, the idling current is applied so that the class-A range into 8 ohms is 125W. The amplifier operates as class-A up to 62.5W into 4 ohms and 31.25W into 2 ohms.”

This inverse relationship between class-A power and load im-



pedance is easily understood when you consider that current—idle current—determines an amplifier’s class-A range and that power equals current squared times load impedance: Cut the impedance in half and the power is halved as well. “So, the A-300 does in fact provide 125W of class A power into 8 ohms,” Duffey wrote. “Into 4 ohms, though, the amplifier’s fixed amount of ‘idle current’ can

measurements, continued

The output impedance, including the series impedance of 6' of spaced-pair cable, was a relatively low 0.14 ohms at 20Hz and 1kHz, 0.18 ohms at 20kHz. As a result, the variation in the frequency response with our standard simulated loudspeaker² (fig.1, gray trace) was minimal, at ± 0.15 dB. The response into resistive loads was flat in the audioband, not reaching -3 dB until

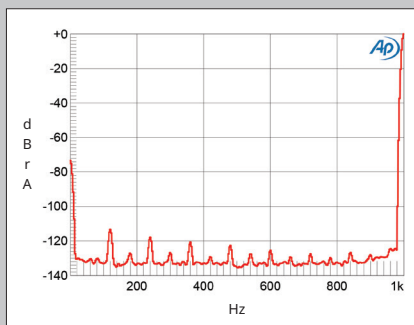


Fig.3 Accuphase A-300, spectrum of 1kHz sine wave, DC–1kHz, at 1W into 8 ohms (linear frequency scale).

180kHz into 8 ohms (blue) and 130kHz into 4 ohms (magenta). With its wide small-signal bandwidth, the Accuphase’s reproduction of a 10kHz squarewave into 8 ohms featured with very short risetimes in both modes (fig.2), with no overshoot or ringing.

The unweighted, wideband signal/noise ratio (ref. 1W into 8 ohms), taken with the

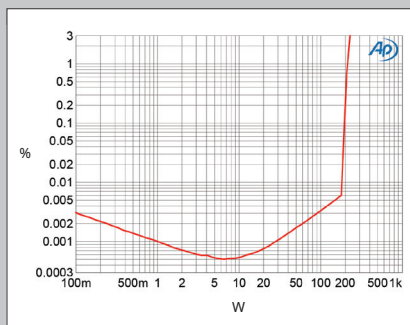


Fig.4 Accuphase A-300, distortion (%) vs 1kHz continuous output power into 8 ohms.

single-ended input shorted to ground and the gain set to MAX, was a superb 88.9dB. This ratio improved to 103.6dB when the measurement bandwidth was restricted to 22Hz–22kHz and to 106.3dB when A-weighted. The ratios were 2–3dB greater with the gain set to -12 dB. Spectral

² See stereophile.com/content/real-life-measurements-page-2.

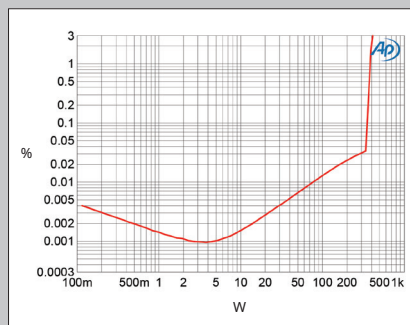


Fig.5 Accuphase A-300, distortion (%) vs 1kHz continuous output power into 4 ohms.

support just 62.5W of class-A power.”

Inokuma's response included a table relating impedance, rated power, class-A range, and maximum power at clipping rated at 1% THD. The table showed that the clipping power easily surpasses the rated maximum output power at each load impedance, reaching 1100W into 1 ohm. How much power does a person need?

“The A-300 is equipped with a real-time watt meter that measures the actual current and voltage flowing and displays output power,” Inokuma wrote. “When you have time, check how much power your speakers require at the volume you normally use.”

The Accuphase A-300 monophonic power amplifier's balanced input section is fully discrete. The output stage uses 20 push-pull MOSFETs in two parallel power-amplifier modules said to have very low output impedance. A gold-plated, glass-cloth, fluorocarbon-resin printed circuit board with big, gold-plated bus bars helps lower that output impedance. So do the large, easily tightened speaker terminals, rectangular wire coils, and short, thick signal paths. The A-300's damping factor is specified as 1000,³ sufficient to tightly control driver motion in loudspeakers. In case this isn't enough power, the A-300 has connections and switches that allow it to be bridged with a second A-300 or used in a biamped configuration.

Created to help celebrate the company's 50th anniversary year, in 2022, the A-300 is claimed to have 20% less noise than its predecessor, the A-250. Central to the amp's low noise is an amplification section that operates like an instrumentation amplifier, equalizing input impedance on the + and - sides. Equally important are “assigning a high gain (12.6x) in the signal input section” and implementation of a “double MCS+ circuit.” What is a double MCS+ circuit? The website puts it this way. “By placing the voltage amplification stage in a two-parallel circuit layout, the MCS+ (Multiple Circuit Summing-up) circuit theoretically reduces the noise floor by about 30%. The A-300 comes with two MCS+ circuits in a double MCS+ circuit configuration.” Another listed feature, “Balanced

Remote Sensing,” is said to “lower the amplifier's output impedance [via] negative feedback with signal sensing from nearby the speaker terminals,” improving damping factor, total harmonic distortion, and intermodulation distortion.

In addition to its robust power supply and high-efficiency toroidal transformer, the A-300 contains two large, specially designed 100,000µF filtering capacitors. The position of both devices has changed from the A-250. The power transformer now sits farther away from the input amplifier, which helps minimize leakage flux from the transformer.

Importantly for such a powerful amplifier, protection circuits protect against excess output current, excess temperature, and short circuits. Such protections reflect longtime Accuphase company policy. “We produce high-quality products with high reliability, high performance, and safety,” he said. “We try to make products that are unbreakable, with long-lasting components and very simple circuit architecture that people can use for a long, long time.”

On the outside

Several features made the A-300 one of the easiest big amplifiers to install and repack to visit my music room. The large handles on its front and rear are a reviewer's dream, and the very large, easily adjusted speaker terminals make connection a cinch. The packaging is equally well thought out; it includes an inner cardboard amplifier holder with thoughtfully positioned indentations that allow for easy lifting, Styrofoam protectors labeled by position (eg, bottom front), and a removable cloth cover that is light years ahead of the slippery, tight plastic component protectors—I call them condoms—that ironically make lifting and repacking heavy equipment a disaster waiting to happen. You will not pinch your fingers

³ According to Accuphase A-300's Technical White Paper, its damping factor of 1000 is “the same as the A-250, but the actual measured value is over 2000, which is 43% higher than the former model.”

measurements, continued

analysis of the low-frequency noise floor while the Accuphase drove a 1kHz tone at 1W into 8 ohms revealed a low random noise floor, and while even-order harmonics of 60Hz were present, these all lay at or below -114dB (fig.3).

Accuphase specifies the A-300's maximum power in Normal mode as 125W into 8 ohms, 250W into 4 ohms, 500W into 2

ohms, and 1000W into 1 ohm, all of which are equivalent to 21dBW. We define an amplifier's clipping power as being when the THD+noise reaches 1%. With that criterion, the A-300 exceeded its specified powers. I measured 210W into 8 ohms (23.2dBW, fig.4), 385W into 4 ohms (22.8dBW, fig.5), and 610W into 2 ohms (21.8dBW, fig.6). I didn't examine the clipping power into 1

ohm, as I don't have a high-power test load with that value.

I examined how the percentage of THD+N varied with frequency at 20V, equivalent to 50W into 8 ohms, 100W into 4 ohms, and 200W into 2 ohms (fig.7). The THD+N percentage was extremely low into 8 ohms (blue trace) but rose into 4 ohms (magenta trace) and 2 ohms (red trace). It

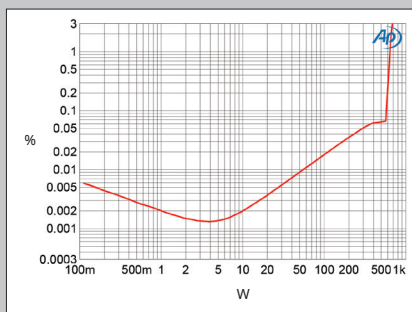


Fig.6 Accuphase A-300, distortion (%) vs 1kHz continuous output power into 2 ohms.

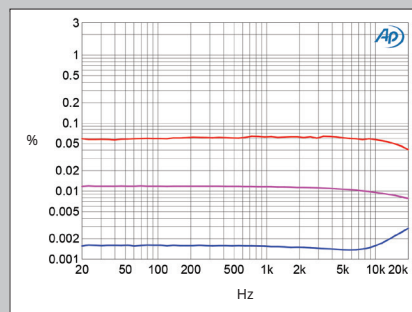


Fig.7 Accuphase A-300, THD+N (%) vs frequency at 20V into: 8 ohms (blue), 4 ohms (magenta), and 2 ohms (gray).

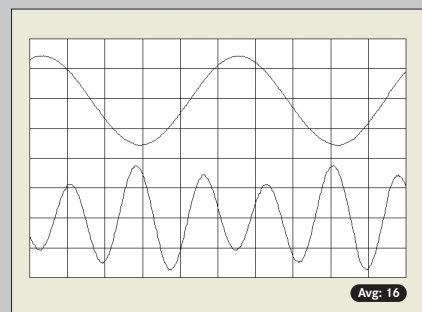


Fig.8 Accuphase A-300, 1kHz waveform at 60W into 4 ohms, 0.009% THD+N (top); distortion and noise waveform with fundamental notched out (bottom, not to scale).

as you and a helper remove this amp from its heavy cardboard packaging or when you repack it.

Equal kudos for the multilanguage manual. Its easy-to-comprehend instructions and diagrams are as complete as you would expect from a 51-year-old Japanese company.

Dominating the front panel are an LED bargraph, which displays output power calculated from voltage, and a digital power meter that shows actual output power. I did as Inokuma suggested and watched the output power at my normal listening levels. It rarely exceeded 62.5W, the power at which the amplifier switches from class-A to class-AB with a nominal 4 ohm load like the Wilson Alexia V.

Beneath the meters is a Standby/On button. When you turn the amplifier on, the outputs mute for about five seconds to allow the circuit time to stabilize. The power button is framed by a panel-length cover you can open or close by depressing a small button to the right. Beneath the cover is a switch for selecting gain, with four choices: MAX, -3dB, -6dB, or -12dB. This setting alters the actual gain, in the input stage; it is not an attenuator. Lowering gain also lowers noise. When Duffey installed the amps, he set the gain selector in the default, MAX position.

A rotary switch determines which meters are displayed: none, both, dB (only the bargraph), or W (only the digital power meter). Another rotary switch sets the meters' range: Auto, 10W, 100W, 1000W. An input-selector button switches between the RCA and XLR inputs. The settings selected are indicated on the illuminated front panel.

The intelligently laid-out rear panel includes, on the left, a line input on an RCA connector, another on XLR, and matching outputs for use in bridged and biamped operation. An operation-mode switch facilitates bridging and biamping. Another switch enables you to choose which XLR pin is + and which is -. Two sets of speaker terminals sit on the right, far from the inputs and above a 15A IEC power connector. Spade lugs, bare wire, and bananas are all accepted.

Setup

I plugged the A-300s directly into the wall, as I do with my reference amplifiers. The front-end components received power from a Stromtank S 2500 battery power source. I placed the monoblocks on Grand Prix Audio Monza amp stands; Cliff said "okay" to using the same three Wilson Audio Pedestals I use under my reference D'Agostino monoblocks. All connections between the dCS Vivaldi Apex digital system, preamp, and amplifiers were balanced.

As is my custom, initial listens were to unfamiliar recordings under consideration for record reviews. First up was a whammo orchestral *tour de force*, the superbly mastered DSD recording of Reinbert de Leeuw's *Der nächtliche Wanderer/Abschied* (DSD64, Challenge Classics CC72957) with the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra. *Abschied* is one of the most demanding recordings I've thrown at a sound system. To do full justice to cataclysmic music, intended as a farewell to composing, equipment must accurately convey a continuous barrage of assaults that resemble universes colliding to the point of apocalyptic collapse. The Accuphase A-300s sailed right through, leaving me feeling that everything that the music had to say had been conveyed.

The recording's other, far longer composition begins softly, with the recorded sound of a dog barking in the distance. Its slowly unfolding opening is more textured, atmospheric, and nuanced than *Abschied*, with numerous small details that build slowly to form a moving whole. The eventual deep, percussive thwacks had tremendous impact. When the recording ended, I had no desire to compare the sound to my reference. I felt whole and complete, as if I had heard all that composer, musicians, and engineers wanted me to hear.

Not realizing that Stephen Francis Vasta had already reviewed Semyon Bychkov's performance of Mahler's Symphony No.1 with the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra (24/96 FLAC, Pentatone PTC5187043), I listened to it with rapt attention. The theme also used in Mahler's *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*, his unforgettable song cycle, washed over me like a warm balm. I was struck by how

measurements, continued

was still low in absolute terms, however.

The distortion waveform was predominantly the third harmonic (fig.8), though the second harmonic was present at a lower level (fig.9). Commendably, higher-order harmonics were absent. This graph was taken at 30W into 8 ohms, which is below the power where the Accuphase's output stage transitions from class-A to

class-AB. Performing the spectral analysis at 75W into 8 ohms, which is closer to the transition power, the third harmonic rose by 8dB (fig.10) compared with fig.9 but was still very low at -99dB (0.001%). With the amplifier driving 60W into 4 ohms (not shown), the third harmonic lay at -80dB (0.01%), the second at -93dB (0.002%). Intermodulation distortion with an equal mix

of 19 and 20kHz tones was also very low in level, even above the transition power at 4 ohms (fig.11).

The Accuphase A-300's measured performance indicates that it has no problem driving low impedances, and it offers very low distortion, especially into 8 ohms. It is also a very quiet amplifier, even at the highest gain setting.—John Atkinson

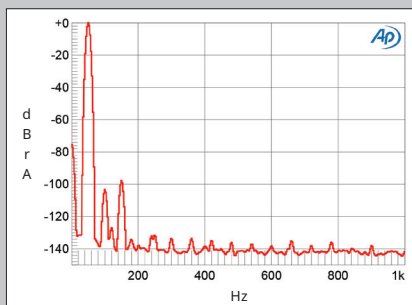


Fig.9 Accuphase A-300, spectrum of 50Hz sinewave, DC-1kHz, at 30W into 8 ohms (linear frequency scale).

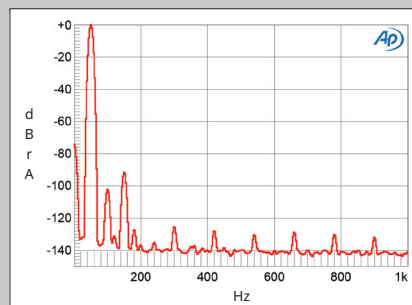


Fig.10 Accuphase A-300, spectrum of 50Hz sinewave, DC-1kHz, at 75W into 8 ohms (linear frequency scale).

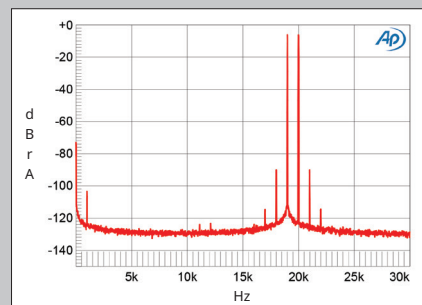


Fig.11 Accuphase A-300, HF intermodulation spectrum, DC-30kHz, 19+20kHz at 60W peak into 4 ohms (linear frequency scale).

well the A-300s depicted the texture of cello, then of oboe, then the clarinet, and then lower-pitched instruments at the start of the third movement. Woodwinds sounded gorgeous. The fourth-movement percussion sounded tremendous; the horns were full and lively but never overbright.

As I listened, I began to understand part of the A-300's magic. As revealing and full range as the sound was, these amplifiers emphasized midrange warmth over top-end brilliance. I also detected a bit of a euphonic white core in the center of the midrange. The subjective tonal balance was just warm enough to create some of the most pleasing sound I'd heard since the Infigo Method-3 monoblocks visited my listening room.

Next up, the Hermitage Piano Trio's *Spanish Impressions* (24/176.4 WAV, Reference Recordings RR-151). Here again I found the sound natural, warm, color-saturated—a total delight. If you want to hear a cello sound like a dream instrument, play this recording amplified by the A-300s. Also play it, with these amplifiers, if you want to hear how well they depict delicacy.

Delicacy reigned in one of my longtime references for color saturation, beauty, and air, Debussy's *Sonata and Trio for Flute, Viola, and Harp*, performed by Emmanuel Pahud and friends on *Debussy: Sonates et Trio* (24/96 MQA, Erato/Tidal). The music was enrapturing, the lively acoustic depicted well if not as strikingly as through my reference.

Switching gears, I cued up the Bill Evans Trio's "Stella by Starlight" from *Bill Evans at Shelly's Manne-Hole (Live)* (24/192 FLAC, Riverside/Qobuz). Brushes sounded extremely clean. The piano sounded well behind the drums. Then, another transition to jazz vocals. The midrange of Youn Sun Nah's voice on "Lento" (24/96 FLAC, ACT/Qobuz), set to the *lento* from Alexander Scriabin's *Prelude Op.16 No.4 in E minor*, sounded gorgeous and full. To quote Ira Gershwin, Who could ask for anything more?

I had hoped to invite lots of friends over to hear the A-300s—that's how much I was enjoying them—but deadlines and an injured dog limited visits to just three people. First up: Mark Schecter, a not-exactly-retired piano technician, formerly of UC Berkeley and Skywalker Studios, who transformed Field Hall's previously mistreated Steinway D in record time. Then came my husband, followed by my dear fellow audiophile, pal, and Zen Priest Scott Campbell. After time spent checking out a few recordings of the orchestral version of *Pictures at an Exhibition*, Mark and I turned to another colorful, drama- and emotion-laden recording that deserves reference status,⁴ Rafael Payare and the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal's recording of Mahler's *Symphony No.5* (24/96 FLAC, Pentatone PTC5187067). I recall Mark's excitement as he exclaimed, "The cellos and oboe are doubling on the same note, and I can hear each instrumental line clearly!"

Scott and I devoted two sessions to comparing the Accuphase A-300 monos (\$51,900/pair) to the much more expensive D'Agostino Momentum M400 MxV monoblocks (\$79,950/pair). During the first session, we attached a Fluke meter to one of the Alexia Vs and used the "1kHz 1/3-octave warble tone at -20dBFS" track from *Stereophile's Sampler and Test CD* to match levels as closely as possible. At roughly the same levels, the D'Agostinos seemed nowhere as loud, perhaps because the Accuphase amps emphasized midrange warmth and fullness over treble brilliance—they sounded warmer and fatter with that touch of whiteness in the mids and a seductive cushion to the top edge. The D'Agostinos sounded more neutral, with a leaner midrange, livelier top, and cleaner bass. You could hear more of the leading edge and more color differentiation with the D'Agostinos; the Accuphase amps initiated tones in a rounder manner. The D'Agostinos also delivered more sense of black space between notes. Where the Accuphases filled silence with a seductive ebony glow, the D'Agostinos

ASSOCIATED EQUIPMENT

Digital sources dCS Vivaldi Apex DAC, Vivaldi Upsampler Plus, Vivaldi Master Clock; Innuos Statement Next-Gen Music Server; Small Green Computer Sonore Deluxe opticalModule; Uptone Audio EtherRegen with SOTM sCLK-OCX10 Master Clock and sPS-500 power supply; Nordost QSource linear power supplies (2); HDPLEX 300 linear power supply; Synology 5-bay 1019+ NAS powered by Ferrum Hypsos linear/switching hybrid power supply; Linksys mesh router and Arris modem; 2017 Apple iPad Pro, 2017 MacBook Pro laptop with 2.8GHz Intel i7, SSD, 16GB RAM.

Preamplifier Dan D'Agostino Momentum HD.

Power amplifiers Dan D'Agostino Momentum M400 MxV monoblocks.

Loudspeakers Wilson Audio Specialties Alexia V and LÖK subwoofers.

Cables Digital: Nordost Odin 1, Odin 2, and Valhalla 2 (USB and Ethernet), Frey 2 (USB adapter); AudioQuest WEL Signature; Wireworld Platinum Starlight Cat8 (Ethernet), OM1 62.5/125 multimode duplex (fiber optic). Interconnect (XLR): Nordost Odin 2 and Blue Heaven subwoofer, AudioQuest Dragon, Canare (subwoofers). Speaker: Nordost Odin 2, AudioQuest Dragon. AC: Nordost Odin 2, Valhalla 2, Valhalla 1; AudioQuest Dragon and Firebird. Umbilical cords: Ghent Audio Canare on HDPLEX 300 LPS and NAS; QSource Premium DC cables with Lemo terminations for QSources; SOTM sPS-500 umbilical cable for SOTM Master clock.

Accessories Grand Prix Monza 8-shelf double rack and amp stands, 1.5" Formula platform; Symposium Ultra Platform; Nordost 20-amp QB8 Mark III, QKore 1 and 6; Titanium and Bronze Sort Kones, Sort Lifts; Stromtank S 2500 Quantum MK II power generator; AudioQuest Niagara 7000 and 5000 power conditioners, NRG Edison outlets, JitterBugs; ADD-Powr Sorcer X4; Environmental Potentials EP2050EE surge protector/filter; Wilson Audio Pedestals; A/V RoomService Polyflex Diffusers; Resolution Acoustics room treatment; Stillpoints Clouds (8); HRS DPX-14545 Damping Plates; Marigo Aida CD mat.

Listening room 20' L × 16' W × 9'4" H.—Jason Victor Serinus

remained silent.⁵ Regardless, the beauty of the Accuphase A-300 sound, and its ability to convey musical truth, was beyond question.

Final thoughts

Every person I invited over for a listen to the Accuphase A-300 monoblocks shared my desire to listen more and more. Their sound is *that* beautiful and seductive. Some amplifiers may sound more neutral. Some will undoubtedly give you more of this or more of that. But few will leave you yearning to play every piece of music you can think of as you relish how beautiful and satisfying it sounds.

The day we packed up these inherently musical, beautifully thought-out monoblocks was a sad one indeed. As much as the Accuphase A-300 Monophonic Power Amplifier deserves a Class A rating on our Recommended Components list, that classification only begins to capture how wonderful it sounds. If pressed to summarize the A-300 listening experience with a single word, that word would be "joy." ■

⁴ See stereophile.com/content/september-2023-classical-record-reviews.

⁵ I wonder whether the Accuphases would have sounded quieter if we had adjusted their gain to -12dB, as shown in the specs, rather than "MAX." Would the 5dB difference in S/N ratio have produced blacker blacks? In retrospect, I regret that I didn't conduct this test.