Soulution 717 Mono/Stereo Power Amplifier

$129,975

The Soulution 717 monoblock (it can also function as a stereo amplifier or for bi-amping) is the latest brainchild of CEO Cyrill Hammer and R&D Director Fabian Morant—a ground-up redesign so new that you would be hard put to find the same two component parts in the 717 and its predecessor, the 710/711.

In a fresh attempt to build an amplifier that offers highest fidelity to sources, Soulution began by revising the circuit layout. In the 717, the left and right channels have their own (14-layer) PC boards and are thus completely separated from each other, resulting in much better channel separation (>130dB) than previous models. The 717's input stage has also been made anew. As in the company's 757 and 727 preamps, the 717 uses parallelized instrumentation amplifiers (rather than the customary buffered differential amps) for wider bandwidth (20MHz), lower noise, and high common-mode rejection ratio (CMRR >105dB), ensuring that even the faintest musical signals will be amplified. With a bandwidth greater than 2MHz, a loop gain greater than 120dB (DC), and an ultra-linear feedback network, the 717's voltage stage sets a new benchmark in phase coherence(<0.2° shift at 20kHz)and low distortion (<–165dBV input-related noise density). The 717's current amplifier stage now features 16 power transistors per channel working mostly in Class A. A smart bias-current control circuit measures the instantaneous current of each transistor and controls its idle current to provide optimal operating conditions. Four ultra-high-peak-power (2100W for 5 seconds) switch-mode power supply modules provide the rail voltages of the output stage. Soulution claims that with these new SMPSes short current pulses of 400A and more are readily attainable.

Does this greatly-improved-on-paper amplifier outdo its outstanding forebears? Without question. Indeed, the 717 is the most lifelike solid-state amplifier I've yet heard—and I've heard some truly great ones. Its sensationally complete and accurate way with the durations of notes (thanks largely to its phase accuracy), its remarkably solid and three-dimensional imaging (ditto), its seemingly limitless speed and power, its lifelike tone color, its phenomenal bass and midbass, its holistic integration of detail, its superb staging make it one of the three or four best amplifiers I've heard in a lifetime of listening. (368)