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Hi-Fi Choice

PASSION FOR SOUND

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POSITIVE FORCE



AVID's Accent integrated amplifier is a winner

£5.75
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Accentuate the positive

AVID's ambitious electronics have trickled down to more terrestrial levels and Ed Selley thinks the Accent is worth your consideration

When you are extremely proficient in one particular area, the decision to branch out into different categories can come with some risk. AVID is synonymous with turntables and has been bolstering these with a range of phono stages, arms and cartridges. This would be quite enough activity for many, but it has also been hard at work building a range of amplifiers and speakers.

It's important when you look at the Accent integrated amp – which represents its most affordable model in the range – to realise that it marks the final point in a trickle-down development policy that began a decade ago with the Reference Pre and Reference Mono, which will set you back £170,000. These are designed and built without compromise and represent the best of their kind. From there, the design is simplified to meet

a lower price point. There's little that the Accent has directly in common with the flagships, but you can trace the process by which one becomes the other through the rest of the range.

Something they do have in common is the technology the Accent employs is not about doing anything radical for the sake of it. It is a Class AB design producing 70W into 8ohm and, though this might not sound especially potent, the power supply is a 617VA mains transformer with 40,000uF of electrical storage capacity – considerable overkill for the output. The internals are fastidiously laid out and there are high-quality components used where they matter.

You can also forget any idea of the Accent being a 'just-add-speakers' device too. There is no digital board of any kind, let alone streaming, room correction or other fripperies. Instead, you get four RCA line inputs

and a phono stage, and it is the latter input where things start to get interesting. The Accent benefits from having the phono board from the Pellar phono stage built in, which means you get support for both moving-magnet and coil cartridges (and a useful interim gain setting for high-output moving coils) where many rivals make do with moving magnet only. There's also a headphone socket with 6.35mm connection. What you won't find is any line-level out or pre out, which might be an issue for some users.

The Accent never feels embellished or coloured, but is hugely enjoyable

In terms of appearance and build, the Accent is the sort of device that impresses more the longer you spend with it. On the face of it, this is a relatively straightforward, all-metal chassis of the sort you might reasonably expect to encounter at this sort of price. It quickly becomes clear, though, that it is outstandingly well made. Everything feels like it has been built to last and details like the machined 'A' logo and the knobs that see use on other AVID devices as well as the custom speaker terminals help to make it feel bespoke and rather special. What will also appeal to some is the fact that the faceplate can also be ordered in silver, which is an increasingly rare thing these days.

DETAILS

PRODUCT
AVID Accent
ORIGIN
UK
TYPE
Integrated amplifier
WEIGHT
14.5kg
DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
470 x 110 x 410mm
FEATURES
| Quoted power output: 2x 70W (8ohm)
| Inputs: 4x RCA; MM/MC Phono
| 6.35mm headphone output
DISTRIBUTOR
AVID HiFi
WEBSITE
avidhifi.com

One other element of the Accent that looks superficially unremarkable but is a fairly big deal for AVID is the fact that it comes with a remote control to operate volume and mute it. The more expensive models use a fearsomely high-quality volume pot that precludes a remote (the company argues that you can set your listening level when you change the side of a record), but the Accent (and now the next model up, the Integra) comes with a bespoke remote. The handset is every bit as beautifully well crafted as the rest of the amp too.

Sound quality

To celebrate this nod to convenience, I initially eschew the phono stage and use the AVID with a Cyrus Stream XR and Epos ES14N speaker. Right from the start, the Accent shows that it has a slightly different temperament to AVID's turntables. The Ingenium Twin (HFC 379) I have used for years is incredibly capable, but a relatively matter-of-fact device. It's perfectly capable of having fun, but on the terms of the record being played.

The Accent adjusts this balance a little. This is still a very accurate and detailed amplifier – and one whose grip and control over the demanding Epos belies the claimed 70W output. It never feels embellished or coloured, but is also hugely and consistently enjoyable. The joyous *The Returner* by Allison Russell is utterly beguiling in the hands of the AVID. The potent, blues-tinged *Eve Was Black* absolutely flies along, underpinned by bass that is deep but exceptionally fast. Russell herself is tangibly and vibrantly real and possesses the scale she needs to sound believable throughout.

This fundamental ability shines through when the superbly talented Cyrus is removed and a Wiim Pro+ at a tenth of the price is substituted. The Accent shows up the differences in the two sources, but without eating into its own superb musicality. The delicate and quirky *Build A Problem* by Dodie still grabs and holds the attention even though it's a slower



The Accent is £500 more expensive than Naim's Supernait 3 (HFC 456), but once you add a Stageline phono stage to match the AVID's MC capability, the two are the same price and present almost identical specs. The Naim has long been my favourite sub-£5k amp. The Accent marks the first time that, at price parity, I find myself coming down – by the finest of margins – on the side of the AVID. Both sound superb into a variety of speakers, but the Accent matches the Naim's engagement while offering a better headphone amp and that outstanding phono stage to boot.



and more considered piece of music. Similarly, changing out the Epos for the more forensic Focal Kanta No.1 (HFC 454) doesn't upset the amp at all and it balances the more ruthless Focal nicely. This ability is no less apparent with the headphone stage, which does a fine job with Focal's Clear MG over-ears and is the easy equal of other internal headphone amps at the same sort of price point.

And we haven't even got to the best bit yet. Switch to the AVID's phono stage and it demonstrates a level of performance I'm not sure is easily matched under five grand. To avoid favouritism, I use a Rega Planar 10 for testing (HFC 456) and the partnership is a sublime one. On a sober technical level, the AVID ticks all the boxes. It's silent at idle, has plenty of gain and the use of external loading plugs means you can perfectly match the impedance too.

Even with the supplied load plugs, though, the manner in which it hammers its way through *As I Try Not To Fall Apart* by White Lies is an absolute joy. The energy and desperate edge to *Am I Really Going to Die?* is perfectly captured by the Accent

and that same superb low end it shows with digital is no less apparent here. Then, you can wind the volume back, select Poppy Ackroyd's wonderfully delicate *Pause* and the effect is unforced, gentle and tonally exceptional. The Accent excels at finding the space in the recording to make this a believable and compelling performance rather than merely being a simple presentation.

Conclusion

What results is an outstanding amplifier, even when judged at the relatively stiff asking price. You can undoubtedly buy more 'complete' devices in terms of overall specification, but the Accent is a compelling demonstration of what happens when you play to your strengths. This is a simple device, but it does the things it sets out to do with such effortless brilliance it's hard not to be won over by the result. AVID's trickle-down policy has taken a while to reach this price level, but the result has certainly been worth the wait.



Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY ★★★★★	LIKE: Engaging performance; excellent phono stage; build
VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★	DISLIKE: No pre out; remote functionality
BUILD QUALITY ★★★★★	WE SAY: A supreme integrated amp that, for analogue users in particular, is hard to beat at the price
FEATURES ★★★★★	

OVERALL
★★★★★