

hi-fi news

THE HOME OF REAL HI-FI
& Record Review

172 pages!

140+
REVIEWS
SEPARATES,
VINTAGE
& MUSIC

ULTIMATE HI-FI 2017

The year's finest products
and essential music

Equipment

65+ standout
separates tested

Vintage

Audio icons
of yesteryear

Music

The best Vinyl,
CDs & downloads

Opinion

Our columnists'
hi-fi high points

• **VINYL/PHONO PREAMPS** DS Audio to VPI • **TRANSISTOR & TUBE AMPS** Audio Research to Quad
• **CD/SACD/NETWORK PLAYERS** Kalista to T+A • **USB DAC/HEADPHONE AMPS** Arcam to Rupert Neve
• **HEADPHONES & LOUDSPEAKERS** AudioQuest to Yamaha • **VINTAGE** B&O, Garrard, Nytech & more

UK £5.99 US \$14.99 Aus \$13.99





Integrated amplifier. Rated at 150W/8ohm
 Made by: Audio Analogue, Tuscany, Italy
 Supplied by: Decent Audio, Stockton-on-Tees
 Telephone: 05602 054669
 Web: www.audioanalogue.com; www.decentaudio.co.uk
 Price: £6500

AUDIO
FILE



Audio Analogue Maestro Anniversary

Marking two decades in business for Audio Analogue, this is a revised 'Anniversary' take on its original Maestro amplifier. It delivers a claimed 150W per channel, and at 31kg is notably bulked up. It's clearly an integrated of very serious intent.

Elaborate heatsinks run down the sides of the chassis, concealed from the front by the thick metal fascia. It's a fully balanced design (a doubling-up of the original Puccini integrated), with a dual-

'The sound was simply packed with detail, the drums tight and clean...'

mono layout and entirely separate amplifiers for each channel, both sides using four pairs of output transistors to drive the speakers.

Two hefty toroidal transformers are mounted at the front of the chassis, and high-spec. components used throughout – eg, custom-made polypropylene capacitors, oxygen-free copper internal wiring and solid copper for the speaker terminals.

The Maestro Anniversary has just two sets of balanced inputs, three pairs of line-level ins on RCA phonos and a single set of speaker outputs, while a chunky metal

remote handset allows volume up/down, stepping through the inputs, standby and mute (the fascia has no selector buttons).

In this all-analogue design, the volume is actually operated digitally. That enables a push of the 'set-up' button to access parameters such as a balance control, a direct mode bypassing the preamp stage and volume control, and adjustment of the brightness and behaviour of the front-panel LEDs.

It also allows various volume control curves to be applied – think of this in terms of throttle mapping, and you're not too far off the truth here. The 'direct' setting would be handy for those wanting to incorporate the Maestro Anniversary into a combined

stereo/multichannel system, making it simpler to use the amp with the front L/R channel preouts of an AV receiver or processor.



CHEST THUMPING

There's an underlying warmth to the way this amp plays music, which may not endear it to those who like things blisteringly hard-hitting and red in tooth and claw, yet it's a big, magnificent sound that's hard to resist. With a clean, precise recording such as Mike Oldfield's *Return To Ommadawn* in 96kHz/24-bit [Virgin EMI] the Maestro

ABOVE: The fascia design is simplified by the use of one control for on/standby, volume and input selection. Dimmable LEDs to its left show the input chosen, those to the right volume

Anniversary is very much in its element, from the ethereal opening with its subtle acoustic guitar developing into a driving bass-line and washes of backing instruments (not to mention tuned percussion, of course) all the way through to the heavy drums and vocals at the conclusion of the first part. The Maestro Anniversary keeps things tight and clean while still offering chest-thumping bass.

All of this is also very much in evidence with the epic *Rolling Stones In Mono* [ABKCO], where the sheer punch of familiar tracks shorn of later stereo fripperies demonstrates the speed and dynamics of prime-period Stones.

The Maestro Anniversary is no less adept with close-focused jazz of the 'brushes on skin, resonant bass and delicate piano' school. And it's also very capable with sweeping orchestral works such as Mendelssohn's *Symphony No 3*, with LSO/Gardiner [LSO Live].

That rich, warm bass, allied to clarity and precision in the midband and treble, ensures both fine insight and an excellent sense of presence. The amplifier's ability to handle musical dynamics is never in doubt, from the stately opening to the infectious rhythms of the finale. The orchestra is treated to explosive power when required, but the Maestro Anniversary amp always sounds very much in control of what's going on.

VERDICT

While some may find the simplicity of the input provision limiting, the Maestro Anniversary offers a mature-sounding and superbly built alternative to more conventional pre/power amplifier combinations. ⤴

HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Power output (<1% THD, 8/4ohm)	195W / 385W
Dynamic power (<1% THD, 8/4/2/1ohm)	209W / 387W / 750W / 1275W
Output impedance (20Hz–20kHz)	0.140–0.155ohm
Freq. response (20Hz–20kHz/100kHz)	–0.1dB to –0.2dB/–3.8dB
Input sensitivity (for 0dBW/150W)	52mV / 650mV (balanced in)
A-wtd S/N ratio (re. 0dBW/150W)	82.6dB / 104.4dB
Distortion (20Hz–20kHz re. 10W/8ohm)	0.070–0.12%
Power consumption (idle/Max. o/p)	115W / 620W
Dimensions (WHD) / Weight	450x168x550mm / 31kg