

MONO STEREO

MATEJ ISAK'S

REVIEW OF THE WORLD'S FINEST AUDIO PRODUCTS

10 YEAR
anniversary

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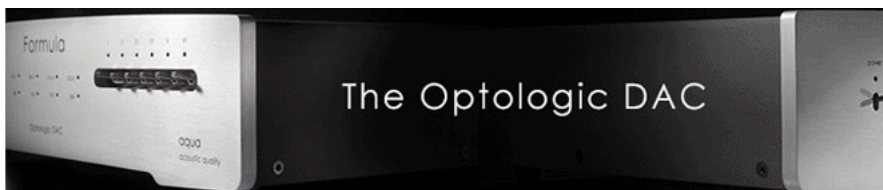
THE TEAM

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YBA PASSION 650 POWER AMPLIFIER TEST and review



Heritage, elegance and audio DNA

Yves-Bernard Andre is a legend in high-end audio and many if not most of audiophiles knows about YBA Audio. There is a lot of passion incorporated into the “music machines” of Yves-Bernard Andre. For the design connoisseurs last revision of design is a pure pleaser. Please take time and read my exclusive interview with Yves-Bernard Andre [here](#) to get the complete picture about a big hearth and mind behind the YBA brand.

First rendezvous

YBA Audio Passion and Signature line first captured my attention at last year's Munich High End audio show. I've written in my report, that along Ayre Reference line, YBA Audio was one of most aesthetically striking designs at the show. There was simply something right and captivating with the appearance of Passion and Signature line. Brushed aluminum front plate with two different densities and orange ascent power meter creates an intimate and elegant timeless looks. My commented, that it looks like luxury item even at first glance. This is also one of most commented amplifier designs from visitors at my house. Along Pathos I don't recall so much positive remarks. Who dare to say, that only Italians do it better?

High-end and high-end looks!?

Why are looks so important in today's high-end audio? For a starter people in general demand more for their money each year followed by the financial movements and globalization of the worldwide market. Among that we share our belloved components of



Integrated Amplifier



audio reproduction mostly with our living environments and people we live with. This calls for a strong WAF (wife acceptance factor) and at least a bit of luxury feel. There is no shame in packing high-quality sounding high-end audio gear in greatly designed chassis. I highly enjoyed products that can harmonize this. More or less quality designs become a must, but the sound should never be subordinated to the looks. The latter trend of looks crawled the high-end audio in past decade and we've witnessed a multiple offerings of greatly looking (often in bling territory) products with mediocre sound. I would rather tolerate mediocre outlooks that sound, but like many I tend to go for both of them.

Massiveness enriched by the CNC cut out YBA logos acting as heat sinks only adds to the whole monumental appearance. Passion 650 looks like heavy league and weight so. It's a substantial piece of kit with a presence of premium styling.

Integration

YBA managed to cleverly blend the quality looks with the wit electronic design, that carries the world know legendary name and performance into 21st century. So YBA Passion 650 is future-retro looking amplifier with a contemporary strike of classical elegance. Two opposite working together hand in hand.

Aesthetics checked! Now how about the sound? Read on...

Sound encounter

Please take time and go through my interview with Yves-Bernard Andre. It will help much more in understanding of YBA Passion 650's audio DNA.

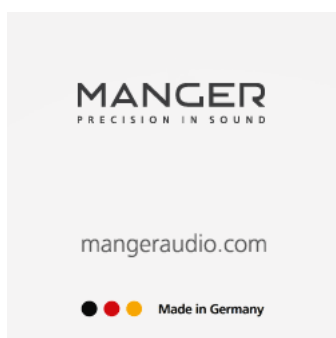
After all the efforts and quests in the high-end audio I simply tend and hanker for the musicality, to be the first recognized attribute of any component. These days we have tube amplifiers sounding like solid state and vice versa. So what happened to technology? Did we really advance sonically or just v with more sophistication/complication? Technology can be great thing, but naming it just high-end (or high-performance) for the sake of labeling is utter nonsense. With YBA Passion 650 power amplifier the balance seem to be reached without constraints.

Musical passionate DNA

YBA Passion 650 never hides its origins. It's a music lover amplifier, that clearly translates Yves-Bernard Andre vision and passion. It feels like Passion is spot on name for the YBA Company mid level power amplifier. If I had to describe it with one word, there is only one right and that is *emotional*.

YBA Passion 650 represents what I called musical heritage amp. It doesn't fall within usual solid-state camp neither is trying to be act with virtual tube like character. Yves-Bernard Andre took the middle path with "voicing" of the amp. This for sure demands an in-depth knowledge and understanding of electronic design. I'm more inclined to power amplifiers, that are build for musicality rather than pure specification. For sure technical norms have to be reached, but more then often perfect measured amps simply fails when it come to the faithful reproduction of music. How's so? Nowadays it seems that everybody can build a great sounding and well measured amp, but a truth is that only few can achieve the pure musical impact with their skills of artisan. As written before there are not many of them in contemporary world. Anyhow they do exists.

I strongly feel that along the needed vast knowledge, amplifier "sound" imprint represent the audio designer view and feel of /for the music. Like it or not designer choices affects the audio outcome of certain high-end audio product. People sometimes laugh at idea of "blindly building and designed of amplifier, but skilled audio designer knows in depth how certain element will affect the overall sound of amplifier. Those choices can be made in a conscious



or subconscious state. What matters is the end result. Only this counts when we spend our limited hours with listening of our audio catalogue.

Choices

I tested YBA Passion 650 with different digital sources, but in the end mainly with Lampizator Level 4 DAC and Audiobyte HYDRA - Asynchronous, fully isolated, battery powered, 384 KHz PCM/5.6 Mhz DSD reference USB interface. With this combination things finally are moving positively in the digital domain through my perception. Audiobyte HYDRA locks with my solid-state drive based MacBook Air Exclusive in what is called access mode, direct mode and most importantly integer mode. Hydra supports integer directly and when connected everything else regarding audio on Mac is idle. Why is this so important? Firstly in years I could hear the results instantly and with the large pace. Everything was present as raw and directly at my face and YBA Passion was the best power amp on the hand to convey this great result.

I'm still hard-core analogue fan, but as I written in my review of Lampizator DAC level 4, things are finally getting into the right direction. With a good friend and life long experienced high-end Igor Kante we recently concluded, that some sort of tube buffer is a must within the digital to analog (DAC) converter. It's not as simple as throwing the tubes in and get away with it, but some companies managed to "nail" it so far.

YBA Passion 650 has more than enough potency in its design to translate music with power dynamics, natural transparency and most important correct timbre and musical imprint. I highly enjoyed my time with Passion power amp. Within its price range and above Passion need no second guesses. Seamless integration of technology in service of music is evident even after few notes of music.

Vinyl orchestra

Getz/Gilberto Girl from Ipanema, Norah Jones Feels Like home, Toscanini. Full stop. Analogue still raise a bar higher. I never needed to use black ops tactics and no hard-core persuasions when trying to present the difference to my visitors. I never comment about any specifics from the start. Just leaving the digital front end playing and then switch to vinyl record of same title. Not once anyone could disagree about the change. For good of course.

I feel the same about YBA Passion 650 power amplifier performance. Just a day ago I received Nancy Brick 180g vinyl version of duo's album The Mountain. Along with Dirty Projectors Swing Lo Magellan this is the highlight of the year for me. It brings back the faith two important things. Namely the LP as album concept and great bands releasing great songs. Through The Mountain Ron guitar and Rieneke vocal sublimely takes you into a out of this world journey of intimacy and emotions. I cannot recall which album in last few years has such an impact on me. YBA Passion 650 was just a prolonged hand and a smooth operator integrator. YBA Passion 650.

In the true spirit of high-end everything is always subordinated to the balanced nature of the audio system. Proper matching of components is essential for a true high-end reproduction and this demands a vast knowledge and mileage. And with all that under a sleeve you'll also need properly designed high-end audio gear. YBA Passion 650 power amplifier is a no-brainer recommendation for a building block of such system.

Conclusion

YBA Passion 650 power amplifier presence or lack of it in my reference system in past months made me think again about the solid-state amplifiers. Passion 650 is without a doubt a product of designer who knows what he's capable of and it's true to the music with his quest. Within its price range and above it Passion 650 offers one of the most complete power amplifier packages, that brings not only great sound tuned to music, but a stand out aesthetics. In these day and age when everything is getting global and chased by competition



YBA offers a great value and pleasure for both ears and eyes. This is for sure an amplifier that will trigger the emotional part of you while conveying the music in best way for years to come. Like Yves-Bernard Andre himself stated in the interview, this is the product that will deliver the music even ten years after. It's a clear recommendation for any serious music lover or audiophile who's prime and top most concern is music.

YBA Passion 650 power amplifier calls out by itself for the 2013 Mono & Stereo excellence award for it's musical, aesthetics and performance.

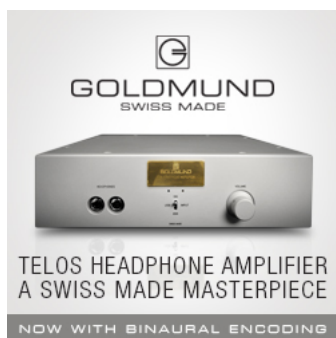
Power output	Stereo 200W/8Ω 400W/4Ω Mono 600W/8Ω Bridged
Audio outputs	2 pairs speaker outputs
Line inputs	1 RCA input, 1 balanced input (stereo) 1 balanced input (mono)
SNR	>95dB
Frequency response	20 Hz - 20 kHz (-0.5dB)
Power supply	Linear power supply with high performance UI-core transformer 1000 VA
Display	VU Meter
Display brightness	Adjustable from remote - 4 levels including off
Remote control	Full function
Finish	Natural aluminium
Dimensions	430mm x 397mm x 178mm w x d x h
Weight	25 kg

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BY HAND
as did the first audiophiles.

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