AUDIO TEST

Quadral Aurum A5

EXCEPTIONAL

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Aurum A5
A power amplifier

A continuous product range such as the Aurum upright speakers get their electrical support from a power amplifier made by German craftsmen. This produces tone reality without prohibitive luxury.

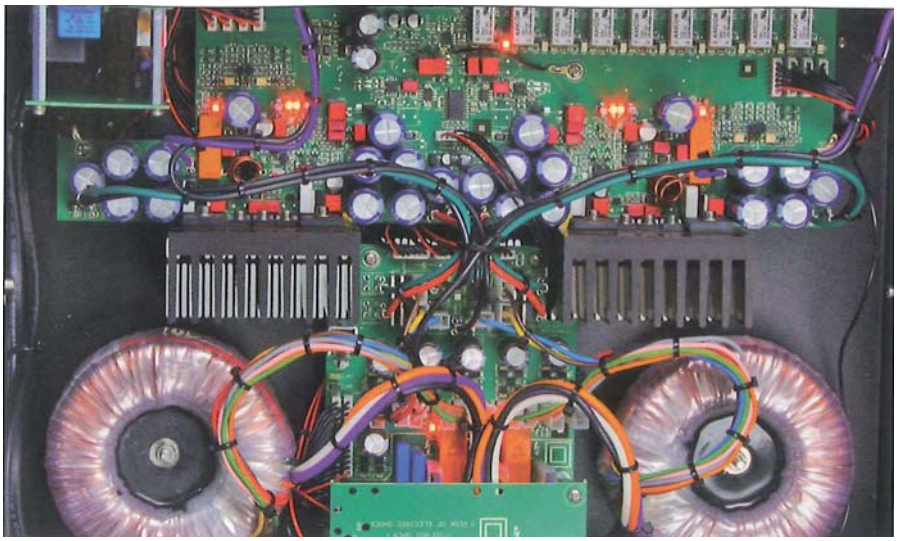
BY JENS VOIGT

The A5's design and technology create a unit that is unmistakeably borrowed from the Aurum range of speakers, which includes the elegant simplicity of the front panel and the choice of wooden side panels, which are used to clad the thick-walled steel chassis. A power amplifier that comes without any tone control is a real statement for an exceptional speaker and enlightened living room acoustics. Its perfectly obvious that: If you don't have to change anything then everything is fine! If you do have to change something then the tone might deteriorate. LP fans frequently place a phono pre-amplifier in the immediate vicinity of the reproduction system. This is why the integrated solutions found in power amplifiers are an acceptable solution but at an increased cost. The A5 uses eight stereo Cinch connectors and one stereo XLR interface, all of which are switched by relays. This means that the Aurum has all of connections that you need. The RC-1 remote system controller is a blessing as compared to the cluttered all-rounder. A handy, solid controller that can control virtually all of the functions for the units in the Aurum range. All of the commands are shown on the amplifier's display and the advantage here is that the intensity can be severely reduced. The internal electronic configuration is a classic example of German engineering: The cable harness has been integrated with the accuracy of a control cabinet and the topography of the boards has been planned in the same way. The subsequent dual mono-block construction using separate toroidal transformers, which are made in Germany by Badel, as well as multiple rectifier circuits are simply astounding. The reservoir and charging capacities, which are adjacent to the Hi-Fi scenario, evaluate the complementary transistor pairs, which consist of 2SA1943 and 2SC5200 for each stereo channel.

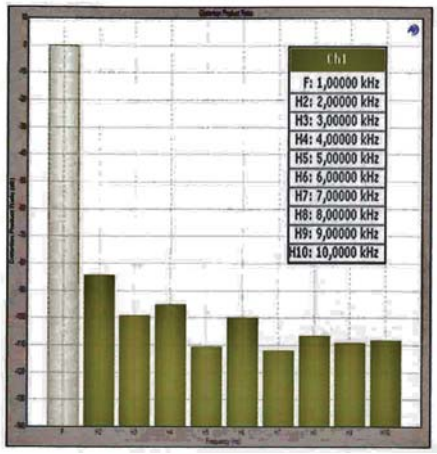
The capacitors used in this context are not the frequently excessive and seemingly potent "Coke can" types, but ones arranged in parallel and their small capacities can be recharged quickly. All of these components are fitted on a cleanly arranged board that holds an elaborate mixture of SMD and conventional components. The clear tone benefit is realised by a very low breakdown vulnerability that is always restricted to the short signal paths. This is precisely what is used here. It is a classic A/B class push-pull circuit with a power source that produces the drive for the speaker.

The handy remote controller controls everything and fits snugly in your hand. There are no problems with the connectors as they are all clearly named.

Picture: Auerbach Verlag



The picture shows the A5's internal dual mono-block construction. The two toroidal transformers with the rectifier inbetween them are at the bottom on the left and right. Above them: The two power amplifiers with fitted with heat sinks.

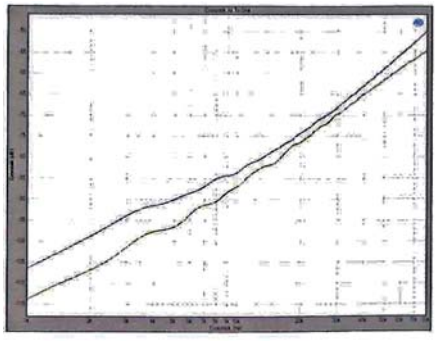


When it was under load it prevailed over any distortion products. This is excellent with regard to the sound

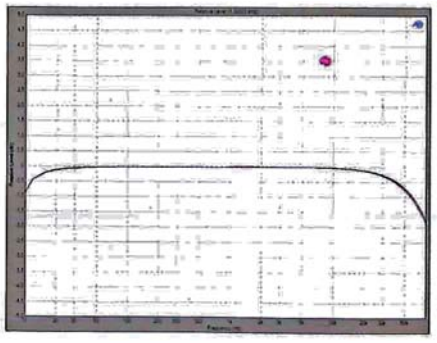
The power available here was measured at 85 Watt (W) at 8 ohms. The values measured at all of the test points reflected the highest standard of technical perfection. All of the values recorded corresponded to the details supplied by the manufacturer or even bettered them, depending on whether symmetrical or non-symmetrical inputs were used. Particularly noteworthy is the exceptionally low cross-talk between the stereo channels, which was well under –95 dB at 10 kH resulting from the use of the XLR input. The low amount of harmonic distortion had no effect on the resulting sound quality and neither did the difference tone distortion (DFD), which amounted to –80 dB at 10W power at 8 ohms. Friends of the A5 can use dazzling acoustic timbres and complex musical structures to describe the amplifier's sound. Naturally, sceptics will always want to know precisely what was meant. Whereas other amplifiers have a somewhat thicker appearance in order to affect the bass and richness, the A5 remains a distinguished realist and not a rapturous romantic. This amplifier delivers precise and dry bass pulses and the instruments have a particularly deep undertone range as well as intangible plasticity. Singing voices are reproduced without any inertia and there is a fine, specific relationship with regard to the clarity between the sibilants and the consonants. An excellent pulse ratio was seen here and at other points, as no over-emphasis was detected at all. Neither plucked strings nor the impact noise of a kettle drum or a hi-hat tended to sound sharp or even cold. The ability to localise specific noises or instruments in a dense arrangement is also an advantage as the acoustic platform is best represented by the amplifier's excellent technical characteristics. The depth and width audibility of the stereo image is flawless. Dense string sets are not reproduced too smoothly but somewhat airy, as the relationship between the amplifier's even and uneven harmonic distortions are effectively dispensed with. It is no surprise that the brass and wood instruments are reproduced with vibrant tones. This also represents the finest dynamic reproduction from the best sides. What you won't get with the A5: the implementation of explosive, roughly dynamic attacks that come from less efficient speakers. This means very sophisticated and non-muscular reproductions. The A5 is recommended to all down-to-earth music lovers who relish the craftsmanship that went into the manufacturing of the speaker. ■

Configuration					
General					
Manufacturer					**Quadral**
Model					**Aurum A5**
Price					2,850 euros
Size (W × H × D)					453 × 130 × 345 mm
Weight					13.3 kg
Details					www.aurumspeakers.com
Connections	**dig audio coaxial**	**dig audio visual**	**analog audio Cinch**	**analog audio XLR**	**Headphones**
Inputs	-	-	8	1	-
Outputs	-	-	-	-	-
Other connections	Fully isolated speaker terminals				
Measurement data: -20 dB for full control at 1 W / 8 ohms					
Signal / noise ratio (SNR)					78 dB (98 dB @ 0 dBV)
Dynamics as per AES 17					76 dB (98 dB * 0 dBV)
Cross-talk at 10kHz					-84 dB
THD+N					0.014%
THD+N level					-67 dBV
DFD (IMD) distortion (IEC60118/IEC60268)					-80 dB
Frequency response distortion (20 Hz - 20 kHz)					± 0.07 dB
Power (1 kHz sine wave * 1% THD)					85W at 8 ohms
Advantages / disadvantages					
Advantages	• Sound characteristics • Exceptional support for acoustic platforms • Circuit design and excellent digital control of the analog parameters				
Disadvantages	• None				

Assessment	
Audio	
Audio measured values	18/20
Bass reproduction	7/8
Mid-range reproduction	8/8
High-range reproduction	7.5/8
Dynamics	7/8
Neutrality	7.5/8
Reproduction quality	**55/60**
User friendliness	**19.5/20**
Configuration/ Preparation	**18/20**
Overall	**92.5 out of 100 points**
Price/performance ratio	**Excellent**
Result	**Excellent 92.5/100**



This superb suppressing of the cross-talk is enlivened by the spatial reproduction



The frequency range reached way above the 80 kH range of the test equipment

Assessment key: 100 - 95: Reference class, 94 - 90: Excellent, 89 - 85: Very good, 84 - 70: Good, 69 - 55: Acceptable, 54 - 40: Adequate, 39 - 0: Poor