

MOON 760A Power Amplifier Review

Written by Andre Marc - Friday, 04 September 2015



Canadian firm Simaudio is held in the highest regard for its engineering-driven, no compromise approach to designing audio components. Their products are also considered works of art by many, with their futuristic industrial design and superior build quality. Their Neo 380D DAC and MOON 180D streamer remain in-house references.

Digital products aside, Simaudio has always been known for producing state of the art amplification. Their top shelf Evolution series offers robust power and stellar casework across preamplifiers, power amplifiers, and integrated amps. Simaudio sent along their Evolution 760A power amplifier for review, which retails for \$8000. The 760A is the first in line in the Evolution series, and is packed with some of Simaudio's best technology.

Design

The chassis design and build quality are superb, with attention to detail in the construction, binding posts, and connectors being off the charts. The amplifier is rated at 130 watts per channel into 8 Ohms, and doubles to 260 watts per channel into 4 Ohms. According to Simaudio, the 760A is a "no overall feedback", dual mono, Class A/B amplifier design, which uses "precision matched proprietary MOON Bipolar output transistors." Simaudio also says they use the cleanest possible circuit layouts and aim for ultra short signal paths. Simaudio also touts the use of an "oversized power supply using a custom proprietary toroidal transformer design." The 760A has both XLR and RCA inputs, with Simaudio preferring XLR for maximum performance. The 760A, interestingly, has an onboard self-diagnostic system to detect overheating or the presence of DC in the input signal. The casework, aside from being stunning visually, is functional too. Its heatsinks are "crafted from custom made aircraft-grade aluminum extrusions and covered with thermally transparent paint." Special attention was paid to case rigidity to minimize external vibration. High quality support feet complete the picture.

Setup

In our system, the 760A is set up in various configurations. It is matched with two speakers, the Thiel CS2.4 floorstanders, and a brand new pair of Bryston Mini T stand mounted monitors. Sources, as noted, are Simaudio's own Neo 380D DAC with built in volume control and MiND streamer module, a Revox A77 reel deck, and a SOtM sMS-100 server. For the first part of the review, the excellent Luminous Audio Axiom passive controller is used, followed by the Coffman Labs G1-A tubed linestage, hand built by Damon Coffman, for the duration. Cabling is a mix of Stager, Transparent, DH

Labs, and Acoustic Zen. The 760A is set up on a Symposium Rollerblock Jr.'s on a Symposium Svelte Shelf. No other special tweaks are implemented.



Listening

After a brief settling in period and streaming a half-dozen albums, one descriptor comes to mind: sophisticated. There is a certain elegance that is the domain of many of the best amplifiers in the world. An effortless flow to the music without a hint of mechanical artifacts.

Playing music through the 760A quickly becomes addicting. Streaming a number of recent Elvis Presley live reissues -- like Prince From Another Planet, Aloha: Live Via Satellite, and Elvis: The Way It Is -- all newly mixed from the original multitrack tapes, is quite a revelation. As close to the Presley live experience as you can experience, the mix engineers put you right on stage with The King, to the point you can hear the position of every instrument, how far Presley is from the microphone, and venue ambience. Here the 760A revealed another one of its strengths: precision. Transient attacks were amazingly quick, and bass notes stopped and started on a dime. SimAudio 760A Listening to a slew of Robin Trower CD rips was also a thrill. His classic, Hendrix-inspired guitar tone and timeless compositions were well served by the Simaudio amp. Trower's classic power trio from the '70s sounded vibrant, with pacing utterly superb. Even Trower's late period, underrated, comeback albums are shown in a new light, with overlooked, terrific songwriting, and his signature Uni-Vibed Strat billowing out of the speakers. The 760A is a progressive rock lovers dream because of its sheer speed, scale, and and the aforementioned soundstaging precision. Speaking of soundstaging, the stage depth the 760A creates is top shelf. It is as if one can visualize the recording venue from back to front. Depth, even more so than width, is what the very best electronics do to create the illusion of live musicians in a space. The 760A also creates a distinct air around each instrument, so much so that one could venture to guess how far each musician is from a boundary during the recording.



The 760A is also capable of a wonderful delicacy and is beautifully nimble on smaller scale acoustic music. Vintage Verve jazz recordings rendered with finesses, while piano, horns, and double bass all sound like wood and brass. This is especially apparent on a DSD download of Johnny Hodges classic, Blues A-Plenty, which has a relaxed and swinging mood, and the 760A swings right along.

The 760A enjoys a virtually non-existent noise floor, and this means amazingly long reverb decays, superb detail retrieval, and a wonderfully transparent and open midrange. It also takes total control of the speaker drivers which results in excellent bass articulation.

To put the 760A through all its paces, an XLR cable was used between the amp and Simaudio's own Neo 380D DAC, using the built-in volume control. This pairing produced even more immediacy and, hard to believe it, even lower noise floor. Mark Knopfler's new album, Tracker, recorded to analog and released as a 24/192 download, sounds as close to studio quality playback as one is probably going to experience in a domestic setting.

SimAudio 760A Ergonomically, the 760A is a dream. It runs surprisingly cool, even though it was powered on 24/7, as Simaudio recommends, for optimal performance. The connections around back are beautifully laid out, there is not a hint of mechanical noise either. During the review period, several visitors comment about how attractive the amp is, and compared the industrial design to a space ship! The pride of ownership accompanying a 760A purchase is definitely something to note, as many audiophiles demand such things in addition to superior sound.

Summing Up

For those looking for a neutral, open sounding, and immensely enjoyable amplifier, the Simaudio 760A is a dream. It has enough power to drive just about any speaker in all but the most challenging rooms, and it is built to a standard most other manufacturers would envy. The Simaudio 760A is reference quality all the way. Going up the Evolution line will get you more power, and allows you to enter the realm of mono blocks, but, at \$8000, buyers will be getting a superbly engineered product that delivers mark-hitting, sonic goodness.

