

The first hybrid amplifier from the Dutch brand PrimaLuna exceeded more than all our expectations.

A few days ago, we were browsing in an unnamed well-known monthly audiophile magazine, the reference record list of that magazine's journalists. We browsed through it with interest, but not without a strong sense of loss of time as we realized that we were again reading about the same albums from 20, 30, 40 or even 50 years ago.

That's is why at some point in our audiophile lives, and this was long before the pandemic started, we stopped visiting hi-fi trade shows for listening to music, where the monotonous demo repertoire was often as unpleasant as the idolater worship for a few expensive brands, which dominated the trade show like a curse wave. Whereas unsubtle judgments were made based on snippets of recordings by Dire Straits, Four Seasons and Patricia Barber.



Visiting such a fair was like staying in a clinical psychology laboratory, where patients with all kinds of cognitive disorders desperately sought justification for living in an audiophile bubble. We, of course, lived in such a bubble for a long time and treated our neurosis with ever more expensive therapies, but at some point, we came to our senses and our audiophilia lost its neurotic and bloated character in favor of pure musical pleasure. We switched from frantically searching for equipment to finding exciting music. Such impressions numbed our brains to the otherwise esteemed seniors of audio journalism who, once again, overwhelmed us with their favourite gramophone records.

That's why we love equipment that lets us enjoy the music we like, that intrigues us and leads us to new insights. We love the PrimaLuna 300 EVO Hybrid because it allows us to listen endlessly to the music we love and are enamoured with: music that takes different forms. From classical electroacoustics by Daphne Oram and Éliane Radigue - protagonists of the excellent documentary "Sisters with Transistors" - to the radical postminimalism of the artists of the Wandelweiser Group, all the way through the jazz, seriousness and avant-garde of the IRCAM (Institute for Research and Coordination in Acoustics/Music) of Darmstadt. With a touch of hip-hop, which is of interest to us, in part because of the fireworks of the production.



To cover such a musical spectrum, it is not enough to have a universal amplifier; what is needed is an amplifier that is versatile and extraordinarily musical, that does not falsify colours, distort dynamics or twist rhythms, and that can withstand the thunder of collapsing scaffolds, piano cadences and brass bands from the Balkans. All these conditions are met by the Dutch manufacturer's new integrated amplifier. It is so good that we can give up looking for an equally satisfying amplifier for the most difficult to reproduce genres of music.

It is probably the first device that can reproduce without any doubt the sound that can only be found in the best philharmonic halls. The accuracy at this point is so high that you can easily recognize whether a live recording was made in a full or only half-full hall. Dynamic differences between different sections of the orchestra, details of phrasing and articulation can be heard very accurately.

Without tubes in the preamp (6x12AU7), it would be impossible to achieve such high-quality sound reproduction, and without transistors (MOSFETs) in the output stage, it would be impossible to achieve such sustained power and sonority. It is no problem to hear if the album was produced in a cramped bedroom, in a cluttered studio somewhere in Florida, or in an auditorium

whose acoustics are faulty due to poor design. And sometimes that is impossible with the current state of recording and editing technology.



The Stradivarius violin shines with masterful maturity, the viola of a novice violinist cuts your throat, and you immediately discover which pianist has not yet advanced to the Steinway model D level. The amplifier is highly detailed, precise, and selective in its analysis of recordings while creating a highly coherent musical scene, the space of which depends only on the producer's intentions. If we had to use a contradiction in terms to describe the character of this amplifier, we would choose smooth resilience and a tight soundstage. Many amplifiers reach their full potential in a specific acoustic band, but the new PrimaLuna performs flawlessly in the entire available range.

By far the biggest advantages of the Dutch hybrid are spaciousness, dynamics, detail, speed and tube sound. The power output - 2 x 150 watts into 8 ohms - is enough to blast even the largest and most resistant speakers out of orbit. We flew with ours for over a month, almost every day and for several hours at a time. These were intoxicating hours, full of audiophile delight, supported by gifts from prestigious vineyards and distilleries.

A true audiophile is someone who stops listening to equipment and starts listening to music. In fact, many listening neurotics will get rid of all their problems by taking this hybrid into their homes. It is very well made, although it certainly does not follow the latest trends in industrial design. But for us, however, such a rough, industrial form is extremely suitable, especially since we are increasingly leaning toward equipment that pairs audiophiles with sound professionals, who have no regard for unnecessary concoctions.

Powering our Nautilus 804s, PrimaLuna processed all audio from Tidal and our MacBook Air digital hi-res library, using SPL Phonitor One D and RME ADI 2 Pro converters. Cabling - Audioquest. It is hard to find a better set. In our humble opinion.



And another thing - the amplifier weighs 29 kg. It's a real rock. A rock on which you can build a real audiophile church. A reformed church. The kind where you don't admire the priest's new clothes or make futile sacrifices on the altars of short-lived prophets burning with lustful hypocrisy. But one in which the more humble the liturgy, the deeper the experience of truth is.

We do not hesitate to repeat that the PrimaLuna EVO 300 Hybrid could be our only and last amplifier in our audiophile existence. Its subtle form contrasts with an outstanding interior, with no room for bad choices. But then, shouldn't we behave a bit like those spry gentlemen who have been listening to the same records for half a century as the measure of their listening experience?



Not at all. And we are reminded of a story from the biography of Kai Danczowska, a great Polish violinist and pupil of Eugenia Umińska, an unparalleled interpreter of the works of Karol Szymanowski. As a token of her great appreciation for her pupil's talent, in 1976, Mrs Umińska gifted her an extraordinary 18th-century violin by Januarius Gaglianus. He was a violin maker trained by Stradivarius, whose sound was admired by David Oistrakh himself, with whom Mrs Danczowska perfected her mastery. This is the violin that accompanied this great artist throughout her prosperous career.

The new PrimaLuna, built in a company headed by Herman van den Dungen, is our audiophile Gaglianus!

The amplifier costs 36 thousand Zlotys. Technical details can be found on the website of Audiofast, whom we thank for the opportunity to test the amplifier.

Link to original review: <https://audiolifestyle.pl/nawosci/test-prima-luna-evo-300-hybrid-integrated/>

