

HERB REICHERT

# Pass Laboratories INT-60

## INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER



If I told you that Pass Laboratories' INT-60 integrated amplifier (\$9000) was engineered by meth-lab trolls, its faceplate was wonky, its transformers buzzed, and it made every instrument sound like a tambourine, you'd think I was a crackpot with some kind of axe to grind, right? Because I suspect that, like me, you've never experienced or even read about a Pass Labs amp that didn't sound good.

What if I said that the Pass INT-60 is a reference-quality stereo integrated amplifier that reproduces recordings in a manner refined and sensuous? That it has a nicely sculpted enclosure that looks expensive and feels timelessly tasteful? That it puts out 60Wpc into 8 ohms and powered every speaker I tried with steady, tantalizing assurance?

Review over. Are you ready for me to coddiwomple? Or would you prefer I discuss the virtues of high-bias class-A vs class-D amplification?

Or should I attempt to answer the No.1 question that the

mere existence of the INT-60 poses to everyone who experiences it: Is it the best integrated amplifier ever?

Because I'm a New Yorker, I always answer a question with a question: How can I know if a painting I saw in a museum, a book I read, or that beer I just drank, would be considered "good" by anyone other than myself? Can I ever objectively assess the quality of my private experiences? Or yours? I think that assigning value to temporal experiences is, at best, a dodgy concept, but I do it all the time—inside my head. Sharing those in-my-head evaluations with a scrutinizing public is beyond difficult, and is best done with extreme caution. Even then, I can do it only in a comparative, anecdotal, or poetic fashion. Why? Because as quickly as my experiences occur, they are turned into memories—and you know how sketchy memories can be.

And what about measurements? Can John Atkinson's graphs of impressive sinewaves and squarewaves corroborate

### SPECIFICATIONS

**Description** Solid-state, class-AB stereo integrated amplifier with remote control. Inputs: 4 line-level (2 RCA, 2 XLR/RCA). Outputs: 2. Power output: 60Wpc into 8 ohms (17.8dBW), 120Wpc into 4 ohms (17.8dBW) (class-A to 30W). Voltage Gain: 29/35dB (selectable).

Frequency response: -6dB at 80kHz. Input impedance: 45k ohms. Volume control: 63dB in 1dB steps. Distortion at 1kHz, full power: 1%. Damping factor: 150. Slew rate: 50V/μs. Output noise: <250μV. Input CMRR: -60dB. DC offset: 0.05V. Operating temperature: 127.4°F

(53°C). Power consumption: 375W.

**Dimensions** 19" (480mm) W by 7.6" (195mm) H by 21.2" (540mm) D. Weights: 93 lbs (42.2kg) net, 110 lbs (49.9kg) shipping.

**Serial number of unit reviewed** 31279.

**Price** \$9000. Approximate

number of dealers: 18.

Warranty: 3 years, limited, transferable.

**Manufacturer** Pass Laboratories Inc., 13395 New Airport Road, Suite G, Auburn, CA 95602.

Tel: (530) 878-5350.

Fax: (530) 878-5358.

Web: <https://passlabs.com>.

relative value? Maybe . . . but, as my friend Steve Guttenberg always says, “Measurements are useless at predicting user preferences.”

Ultimately, the virtue of an audio component must be judged solely on the *quality of experience* it delivers to someone using it to listen to familiar recordings. Therefore, as a reviewer, the most effective tools I can employ are: memories of a lifetime of musical pleasures, a handful of interesting recordings, and some rigorously honed connoisseurship. If you stay with me, I will apply all three to the heaviest and most gratifyingly effective amplifier that has ever graced my Bed Stuy hermitage.

### Description

Pass Laboratories, founded in 1991, has at least three *Daoshi*, or high priests of Taoist amplifier design: Nelson Pass and his colleague, Wayne Colburn, plus a new hire, Jam Somasundram, who designed the HPA-1 headphone amp,<sup>1</sup> all of whom create fresh new inventions based on the ancient alchemy of single-ended, class-A amp design.

According to a statement by Pass on his company’s website, the INT-60 isn’t literally identical to its standalone counterpart, the XA60.8 [60W monoblock power amplifier]: “[I]n particular the INT-60 is a stereo amplifier using the hardware of a single-channel XA60.8, and it necessarily has lower bias current in the output stage and does not operate [in] class-A to 60W, rather somewhat less than half that.

“There are a couple new wrinkles to the ‘preamp’ portions of these two products. The volume-control circuit outputs are buffered by 6dB gain stages whose input JFETs present many megohms of load, getting attenuator distortions down below the 0.001% line. The extra gain allows optimal figures for the power-amp stages, and offers improvement over the previous ‘passive’ circuits.”

The INT-60 comes set to 29dB gain; removing an internal pair of jumpers adds 6dB more. At the lower gain, about 800mV will drive it to full power. “Each channel has 20 power transistors rated at 150W each,” Colburn told me. “The power supply is a large toroid rated at 1kVA feeding 240,000µF of capacitors in multiple filtered sections.” Illustrating this point with comparisons to two different series of Pass Labs power amplifiers, Colburn said that the power supply in the INT-60 is an XA60.8 supply, not an XA60.5 supply.

The elegant front panel, designed by Desmond Harrington, has Standby and Mute buttons, four input buttons, a Volume knob, and one of Pass Labs’ signature needle-and-scale meters, this one indicating when the INT-60 slips out of class-A and into class-AB. According to Kent English, of Pass Labs tech support, a “[p]ianissimo note has the meter staff left of 12 o’clock,” and a “[f]ortississimo note has the meter staff right of 12 o’clock . . . and *well* right of 12 o’clock, the meter hits the right-hand stop at about rated output.”

The INT-60’s rear panel features four line-level preamp inputs: two that offer both XLR and RCA connectors, and two more offering RCAs only. Also included are two preamp outputs (XLR and RCA); two pairs of high-quality speaker binding posts, built with torque-limiting ratchets; and an AC power switch, IEC mains socket, fuse holder, and ground post.

### Listening with the Zu Audio Soul Supremes

As some of you know, here in Bed Stuy, I’m my own one-man religious order: the Hermit of Hart Street. Wearing black and cloistered in my leafy grotto, I use as my daily prayers the sacred music of the world’s diverse cultures.

<sup>1</sup> See John Atkinson’s review in the July 2016 issue: [www.stereophile.com/content/pass-labs-hpa-1-headphone-amplifier](http://www.stereophile.com/content/pass-labs-hpa-1-headphone-amplifier).

## MEASUREMENTS

I performed a full set of measurements on the Pass Laboratories INT-60 using my Audio Precision SYS2722 system (see the January 2008 “As We See It,” [www.stereophile.com/content/measurements-maps-precision](http://www.stereophile.com/content/measurements-maps-precision)). I preconditioned the amplifier by running it with both channels driven at one-third power into 8 ohms for 60 minutes. This is, thermally, the worst situation for an amplifier with a class-B or -AB output stage, as one-third power is when the output transistors dissipate the most heat. At the end of the hour, the highest temperature on the side-mounted heatsinks was 114.7°F (45.9°C), and that on the top panel, which was highest toward the rear, was 107.1°F (41.8°C). The THD+noise measured a constant 0.084% throughout this hour.

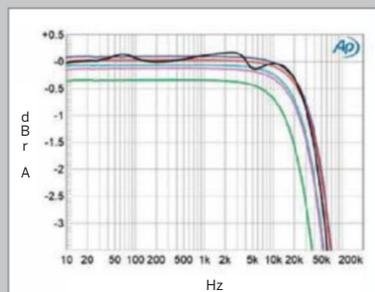
The volume control operated in accurate 1dB steps, and the voltage gain into 8 ohms with the volume control set to its maximum measured 28.6dB

for both balanced and unbalanced input signals. Both inputs preserved absolute polarity (*ie*, were non-inverting). The input impedance was usefully high, measuring 90k ohms balanced and 75k ohms unbalanced at low and middle frequencies. The impedance dropped slightly at the top of the audioband, to 80k ohms balanced and 34k ohms unbalanced, but these are still high in absolute terms.

Overall, the INT-60’s measured performance suggested that its circuit uses a modest amount of negative feedback, so I wasn’t surprised to find that its output impedance was relatively high for a solid-state design: 0.16 ohm at 20Hz and 1kHz, rising to 0.35 ohm at 20kHz (both figures include 10’ of speaker cable). Nevertheless, the modulation of the amplifier’s frequency response into our standard simulated loudspeaker<sup>1</sup> was fairly low, at 40.18dB (fig.1, gray trace). Pass Labs specifies the INT-60’s frequency response as

being down by 6dB at 80kHz. Fig.1 confirms that figure, there being a reduction in output of just 0.25dB at 20kHz. The shape of a 10kHz squarewave into 8 ohms (fig.2) had slightly slowed risetimes, but with commendable absences of overshoot and ringing. Figs. 1

<sup>1</sup> See [www.stereophile.com/content/real-life-measurements-page-2](http://www.stereophile.com/content/real-life-measurements-page-2).



**Fig.1** Pass Labs INT-60, frequency response with volume control set to its maximum at 2.83V into: simulated loudspeaker load (gray), 8 ohms (left channel blue, right red), 4 ohms (left cyan, right magenta), 2 ohms (green) (0.5dB/vertical div.).

The biggest part of this spiritual practice involves listening to every LP of Gregorian chant or early music I can find. I especially enjoy the well-played, superbly recorded offerings from French Harmonia Mundi. Lost in meditation . . .

I'd taken at least a dozen tours of both sides of Konrad Ruhland and Capella Antiqua de Munich's *Chants Grégoriens pour le Temps de Noël* (LP, Harmonia Mundi 5112) before I noticed the single example of polyphony, "Tûbe Domne Silentium." But it took me no time at all to hear the Pass Labs INT-60 demonstrating to me why the Zu Audio Soul Supreme loudspeakers (\$4500/pair), which I reviewed in the July 2016 issue, aren't merely good but *great*.<sup>2</sup> (Think perfect tonal character mixed with palpable sensations of realism.) It took me even less time to recognize the clear sophistication the Pass integrated brought to these mesmerizing performances recorded in 1972–73. Imagine a real acoustic space vibrating with 10th-century plainsong floating above an abyss of reverential audio silence. Imagine the most delicate and well-defined choral textures. Imagine no excess added reverb distracting from the torchlit atmosphere of the recording venue.

The Soul Supremes can sing and chant with only a few watts; typically, they sound present, fast, and superdetailed through the midrange, but with a slight bit of extra energy between 2kHz and 8kHz. The INT-60 seemed to mitigate that extra energy. That clanky piano sound that John Atkinson referred to in his write-up of his measurements of the Zu became relatively unnoticeable. The Soul Supreme's bass



The INT-60's logically laid-out rear panel.

is always quick, clean, and a little lean; with the INT-60 it was less lean, more muscular, and BIG.

In my room, this amp-speaker combination made me bless Pass and venerate Zu for their contributions to some of the best reproductions of music I've experienced this century. If you wonder about my personal taste in audio—what kind of sound I *really* like—this is it.

#### Listening with the Magnepan .7s

I don't care what class of "Recommended Components" El Capo puts them in—I love the Magnepan .7 loudspeakers' (\$1400/pair) fundamental musicality, *détail liquide*, and spectacular imaging. The Pass Labs INT-60 drove the .7s with more subtle magic, slam, and lush joy than I'd previously

<sup>2</sup> See [www.stereophile.com/content/zu-audio-soul-supreme-loudspeaker](http://www.stereophile.com/content/zu-audio-soul-supreme-loudspeaker).

#### measurements, continued

and 2 were taken with the volume control set to its maximum of "63"; there was no difference in the performance with the control set to "40," and the excellent channel matching seen in fig.1 was maintained at the lower setting.

Channel separation at 1kHz was excellent, at 96dB R-L and 104dB L-R, and at 20kHz was still, respectively, 80 and 87dB. The unweighted, wideband signal/noise ratio (ref. 2.83V into 8 ohms, 1W), taken with the input short-

ed to ground but the volume control set to "63," was 76.5dB. This increased to 84dB with an A-weighting filter; spectral analysis of the low-frequency noise floor while the INT-60 drove a 1kHz tone at 1W into 8 ohms revealed the presence of some low-level, supply-related spurious (fig.3). These were not affected when I experimented with the ground connection between the INT-60 and the Audio Precision test system. Those spurious at 60Hz and its

odd harmonics, which will be due to magnetic interference from the power transformer, are higher in the right channel (red trace), perhaps because that channel's circuits are closer to the transformer—but none of the spurious are anywhere close to high enough to approach audibility.

The INT-60 is specified as delivering 60Wpc into 8 ohms (17.8dBW) at 1% THD+N; as shown in fig.4, our sample clipped at 79Wpc with both channels

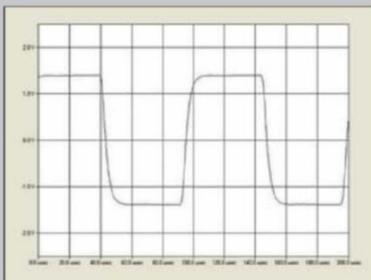


Fig.2 Pass Labs INT-60, small-signal, 10kHz squarewave into 8 ohms.

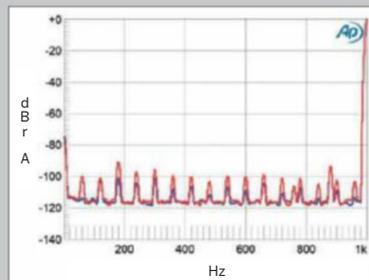


Fig.3 Pass Labs INT-60, spectrum of 1kHz sinewave, DC-1kHz, at 1W into 8 ohms (linear frequency scale).

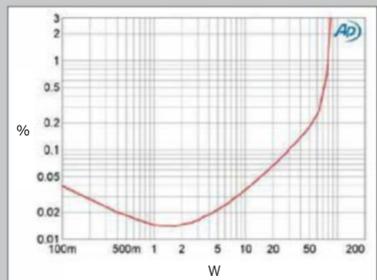


Fig.4 Pass Labs INT-60, THD+N (%) vs 1kHz continuous output power into 8 ohms.

heard from these speakers. But occasionally, that joy got a bit too lush.

Over and over for two days, I played *The History of Rock Instrumentals, Volume 2* (LP, Rhino RNLP 70138), and all I had was fun as I tried to decide which track on this extravaganza of Guild, Gibson, and Fender guitars was the most grungy and proto-punk. Link Wray & His Ray Men's "Rumble" used hard twang and long reverb to serve up raw, Eisenhower-era ominousness. Duane Eddy's "Rebel-Rouser" and Bill Justis & His Orchestra's "Raunchy" both feature grungy, deep-textured sax. But it was the sounds of the piano and plucked double bass in the Wailers' (no, not those Wailers) "Tall Cool One" that upstaged all that greased-hair guitar posturing. The attitude in "Tall Cool One" is sly and cocksure.

Through the Pass Labs–Magnepan combo, guitars sounded extra-rich and tactile. The piano sound was of genuine wooden keys and hammers. But along with all that early-rock swagger was a subtle feeling of rounded lower-level details that sabotaged some of the jukebox impact I was hoping for. The Magnepan .7s never actually sound soft, but through them, instrumental textures—especially of cymbals and snare and kick drums—can feel a little rounded and rubbery. I was expecting the INT-60 to tighten things up a bit more than it actually did. Despite my dashed expectations, the INT-60 was still the best amp I've used with the Magnepan .7s.

### Listening with the KEF LS50s

The best thing about the Compact Disc has always been the lovingly remastered sets and series of historical, esoteric, and regional music. *London Is the Place for Me: Trinidadian Calypso in London, 1950–1956* (CD, Honest Jon's Records HJR CD2) is a modest but well-chosen compilation that includes high-quality images of each song's original record label. Young Tiger, The Lion, The Mighty Terror, and others

are included. It's a CD to be treasured, and I've played it countless times, sometimes for days on end. The music just keeps getting better. However, through most of my systems it sounds as if it's coming out of a table radio. Not with the Pass Labs INT-60 and the KEF LS50s. Finally, this music sounded as free, richly toned, and swinging as I've always wished for. Every song grabbed me, and made me smile and wonder what life was like for Caribbean immigrants in a London still recovering from WWII.

My favorites are The Mighty Terror and Rupert Nurse's Calypso Band doing "No Carnival in Britain," and The Lion doing "Some Girl Something"—both are pure dance-around head shakers. In "No Carnival," the trumpets, clarinets, and (especially) the saxophone all sounded brassy, sweaty, and full-on blatty. Congas had volume, wood, and skin. For the first time ever, voices sounded rich and full. I could sense the microphone in The Terror's hand. The Pass Labs INT-60 and KEF LS50 speakers showed me Kodachrome glimpses of a real 1950s London.

The INT-60 may be made in California, but the way it reproduced songwriter and visual artist Terry Allen's *Human Remains* (CD, Sugar Hill SHCD-1050) took me right to Lubbock, Texas. I called all my friends: "You won't believe how perfectly perfect the tones of Allen's and Lucinda Williams's voices are in 'Back to Black!'" This was the first time that, from song to song and from instrument to instrument, the reverb throughout this album seemed properly scaled. It was also the first time I heard so much wood and metal. In "After the Fall," the bass was stronger and reached lower than ever. "Hey remember all those psychedelic nights / When your head came loose and floated into the lights / And all them girls without any tops at all / Down in the dirt uh-huh uh-huh after the fall."

### Listening with the DeVore Fidelity Orangutan O/93s

Imagine: The ultra-informative Roksan Radius 7 turntable

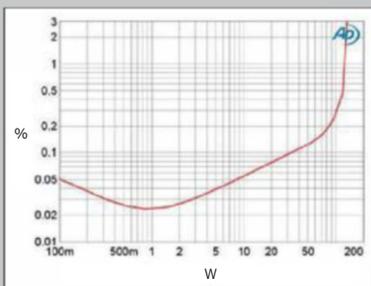
#### measurements, continued

driven into that load (19dBW). The distortion begins to rise out of the noise at around 2W, and the gentle rise in THD+N above that power suggests that only a modest degree of negative feedback is used. Into 4 ohms (fig.5), the amplifier clipped at 125W (18dBW), a slightly higher power than the specified

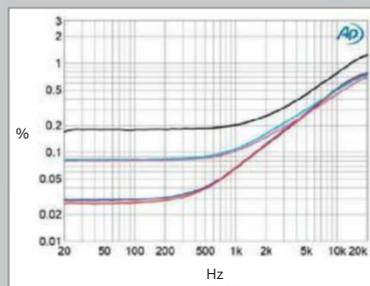
120Wpc, while with one channel driven into 2 ohms (not shown), the INT-60 clipped at 200W (17dBW).

The Pass Labs was less comfortable driving 2 ohms than it was with higher impedances, as shown by fig.6, which plots the percentage of THD+N against frequency into 8, 4, and 2 ohms at a

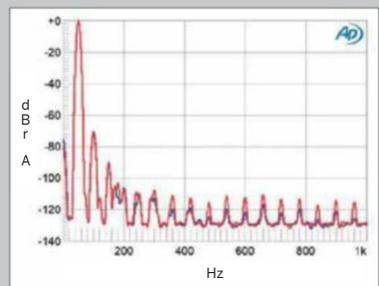
fairly high level, 12.65V, equivalent to 20W into 8 ohms, 40W into 4 ohms, and 80W into 2 ohms. Note that with the limited amount of negative feedback used, the distortion rises in the upper octaves—although, as high-level content above 10kHz is very rare in music, this decreasing linearity shouldn't



**Fig.5** Pass Labs INT-60, THD+N (%) vs 1kHz continuous output power into 4 ohms.



**Fig.6** Pass Labs INT-60, THD+N (%) vs frequency at 12.65V into: 8 ohms (left channel blue, right red), 4 ohms (left cyan, right magenta), 2 ohms (left, gray).



**Fig.7** Pass Labs INT-60, spectrum of 50Hz sine wave, DC-1kHz, at 20W into 8 ohms (linear frequency scale).

with the dynamic Dynavecator 20X2L moving-coil cartridge loaded by Dynavecator's super-fine SUP-200 step-up transformer pulsing Parasound's pure-toned Halo JC 3+ phono preamplifier feeding the Pass Labs INT-60 connected via Auditorium 23 speaker cables to John DeVore's vividly lucid Orangutan O/93 speakers, *all together* playing "Wreck of the Old '97," from a mono first pressing of one of Sun Records' earliest offerings, Johnny Cash's *All Aboard the Blue Train* (LP, Sun LP 1270): "He was goin' down grade makin' 90 miles an hour / when his whistle broke into a scream." I could feel Cash's guitar strums in the hairs on my arms. Guitar tones were sharp and thick. Need I tell you how thrillingly this killer rig reproduced this masterpiece from Cash and producer Sam Phillips? Okay then—I will.

Never before the Pass-and-DeVore combo had Cash's voice had as many subtle, super-rich shadings of tone and texture. Never had it sounded stronger, denser, more real. Never had I noticed as many low-level contrasts. Never. "He was found in the wreck with his hand on the throttle / scalded to death by the steam."

So imagine this same system playing the stereo and mono versions of Gunther Schuller's "Conversation," recorded in 1960 by the Modern Jazz Quartet with the Beaux Arts String Quartet, conducted by the composer and released on Third Stream Music (LPs, Atlantic 1345 mono and SD 1345 stereo). This is early multitrack recording at its best, preternaturally clear and tastefully mixed (multitrack wizard Tom Dowd joined engineers Earle Brown and Frank Abbey to create the Full Spectrum Stereo version). It's a sophisticated and nearly magical musical experience, but when I switched to the mono version, the first thing I noticed was how the bass felt more full and powerful than in stereo. Percy Heath's double bass appeared almost life-size in my room.

## ASSOCIATED EQUIPMENT

**Analog Sources** Linn LP12 Valhalla turntable, SME M2-9 tonearm, Dynavecator DV 20X2L cartridge; Roksan Radius 7 turntable & tonearm & Corus Silver cartridge; Rega Research Planar 3 turntable & RB330 tonearm & Elys 2 cartridge.

**Digital Sources** Integra DPPS-7.2 DVD-Audio player, Schiit Audio Yggdrasil DAC.

**Preamplification** Dynavecator P75 Mk.3, Lounge Audio LCR Mk.III RIAA, Parasound Halo JC 3+ phono preamplifiers; Bob's Devices CineMag 1131, Dynavecator SUP-200, Lounge Audio Copla step-up transformers.

**Power Amplifiers** First Watt J2, PrimaLuna Prologue Premium.

**Integrated Amplifier** Line Magnetic LM-518 IA.

**Loudspeakers** DeVore Fidelity Orangutan O/93, Dynaudio Excite X-14 & X-18, Falcon Acoustics LS3/5a, KEF LS50, Koronus Audio Essence, Magnepan .7, Rogers LS3/5a, Technics SB C700, Zu Audio Soul Supreme.

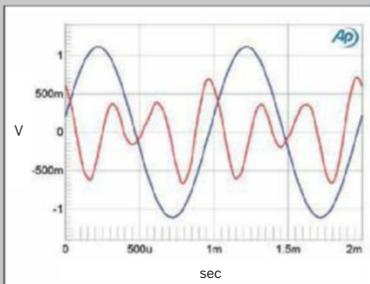
**Cables** Digital: Kimber Kable D60 Data Flex Studio (coaxial). Interconnect: AudioQuest Red River (balanced) & Cinnamon, Auditorium 23, Kimber Kable Silver Streak, Wireworld Eclipse 7 & Silver Eclipse 7. Speaker: AudioQuest GO-4, Auditorium 23. AC: AudioQuest NRG-2.

**Accessories** AudioQuest Niagara 1000 Low-Z power conditioner, PS Audio Perfect Wave Power base; Dr. Feickert Analogue Protractor NG & Adjust+ software; Acoustical Systems SmarTractor cartridge-alignment protractor; Musical Surroundings Fozgometer azimuth-adjustment meter; Moongel stylus cleaner.—Herb Reichert

### measurements, continued

affect sound quality.

At low frequencies, the predominant distortion harmonic is the subjectively benign second (fig.7), though at 1kHz, the third harmonic rises higher in level than the second (figs. 8 and 9). Despite the increase in its harmonic distortion in the top octave, the INT-60 did relatively well on the punishing high-frequency intermodulation test, even at a fairly high power into 4 ohms (fig.10).

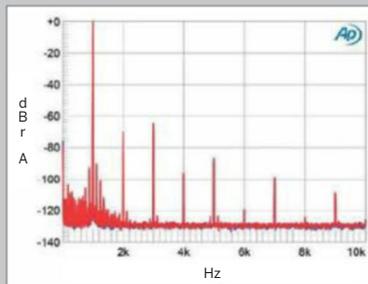


**Fig.8** Pass Labs INT-60, 1kHz waveform at 20W into 8 ohms, 0.08% THD+N (blue); distortion and noise waveform with fundamental notched out (red, not to scale).

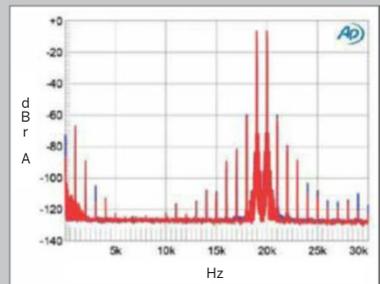
The second-order or difference component resulting from an equal mix of 19 and 20kHz tones lies at a respectably low -67dB (0.04%), though the higher-order components at 19 and 21kHz are a little higher in level, at -60dB (0.1%).

As I have come to expect from Pass Laboratories, the INT-60 offered respectable measured performance that included a careful balance of the consequences of the limited amount of

negative feedback used. I'm a little suspicious of the change from predominantly second- to third-order harmonic distortion as the frequency rises, as I feel that amplifiers that maintain a constant distortion signature sound better. However, it's as fair to concede that I have no actual evidence that that is true in this case as it is to note that Herb Reichert loved the INT-60's sound.—John Atkinson



**Fig.9** Pass Labs INT-60, spectrum of 1kHz sine wave, DC-1kHz, at 20W into 8 ohms (linear frequency scale).



**Fig.10** Pass Labs INT-60, HF intermodulation spectrum, DC-30kHz, 19+20kHz at 40W peak into 4 ohms (linear frequency scale).

Then violist Carl Eberi, pianist John Lewis, and vibraphonist Milt Jackson entered, and all that extra corporeality began to pulse and morph in the most tantalizing and mesmerizing ways. The supercreative minds behind this music entered my consciousness.

I have compared the mono and stereo versions of *Third Stream Music* on numerous systems—some costing well over \$100,000. Each time, I hear some new difference(s) between them, but I've never enjoyed the individual molecules of the MJQ's vibraphone-charged air as I did with the Pass INT-60 driving the DeVore Orangutan O/93s.

### Listening with the Falcon Acoustics LS3/5a's

I hadn't planned to include Falcon Acoustics' LS3/5a speakers in this review, but late one night I put away the DeVore Orangutans and set up the Falcons on stands 12" from the front wall. Then I turned out the lights and played that Johnny Cash album again. I thought that the Pass Labs INT-60 would do good job of driving my favorite almost-invisible speaker—but I never imagined that Cash's shivering voice would sound as perfectly toned and as tangibly present as it did in "I Heard that Lonesome Whistle." I knew the Falcons could boogie and roll, but I was still surprised by the pulse-quickening, wheel-driving momentum I experienced with "Rock Island Line." Every vocal and instrumental tone began and ended in a fresh, firm, complete manner. Every bass pluck and guitar strum—every change in the timbre of Cash's voice—registered positively on my awareness spectrum.

As the cowcatcher of that Rock Island Line locomotive plowed my speaker cables, its engineer gloated, "Well I

fooled you, I fooled you / I got pig iron / I got *all* pig iron." Playing this "hot stamper" Sun LP through the Pass INT-60 and Falcon Acoustics LS3/5a's made Cash's voice and guitar sound extraordinarily solid and real.

### Conclusions

Stashed in my bunker are 10 pairs of speakers. The Pass Labs INT-60 integrated amplifier drove all of them with winsome ease, natural authority, and the most realistic timbres imaginable.

Every night, the INT-60 delivered what British beer brewers call *sessionability*—which *New York Times* writer Alex Halberstadt defines as "the degree to which a substance incites you to consume more of it."<sup>3</sup> The INT-60's dominant trait was to suck me in and glue me to my seat as it continued to reproduce music with so much low-key *flavor*, natural color, and *more-ishness* that I could never play just one record and go to bed early.

Like a sessionable beer, the INT-60 was not *too* anything: never too bright, dark, bland, or spicy, never too wet or dry. It always sounded relaxed and balanced. It could play softly and quietly, and rhythms would still sparkle and jump. It could crash a train and not break a sweat. It kept a steady hand on the amp/speaker interface. It felt infinite and invisible. It got out of the way. It did everything right—or, at least, what I imagine "right" to be. It transcended all notions of tubes *vs* solid-state. It was everything I expected from the House of Taoist Masters, aka Pass Laboratories, Inc., and much more. ■

<sup>3</sup> Alex Halberstadt, "Letter of Recommendation: Cheddar and Sour Cream Ruffles." *New York Times*, August 17, 2016: <http://tinyurl.com/z5zv8qy>.