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»New Sovereign«:

Audionet Watt

Analogue integrated amplifier – this has been a singular term so far in the halls of the Audionet company that is now located in Berlin. For years the SAM had to stand its ground in its different evolution stages alone. Its sonic capacities in the current G2 version still rank among the best in the category of integrated amplifiers. With the introduction of the DNx components, Audionet's network-compatible top-level line, the end for an amp with only analogue inputs seemed to be a done deal. Early this year, at the CES in Las Vegas, I then spotted to my surprise the prototype of a new integrated amplifier which offered neither a network input nor a WLAN antenna. So in the end the SAM G2 was destined to finally get a bigger sibling and was christened on the suggestive name »Watt«. According to Audionet, this is by no means an allusion to high wattage, but a bow to Scottish inventor James Watt. After all, with their creations the new Berlin residents see themselves in the context of academic research, which is why all new components – like the Planck CD player we already reviewed in issue 2/2016 – are named after scientists now.

At first glance the Watt looks like the big brother of the SAM G2. Yet at a second glance it turns out to be a fully autonomous development. Let's start with the colour of the enclosure: the silver made way to a distinctive looking light bronze. Then the screws for fastening the top lid are no longer visible. Moreover, Audionet has revised the construction of the chassis made from 0.8" aluminium profiles, focusing particularly on resonance optimisation.

In the centre of the engraved faceplate we see the display and a rotary knob which can do more than just control the volume level. But more on this later. Meanwhile a look at the rear panel will make the audiophile's heart skip a beat. To begin with, the four inputs – one of them as XLR version and one optionally convertible to a phono input – and also the preamp output arrest our attention. The tight spacing of the gold-plated sockets points at what is confirmed

by a view inside: the Watt is a painstakingly designed dual-mono construction. So it comes home to me now what strategy Audionet followed here, i.e. maximum engineering effort for ultimate sound quality.

Each channel has its own 750 VA transformer. Secondary windings feed the analogue and the control units separately to suppress mutual influences. A bank of electrolytic caps with 200,000 microfarads stands by as energy buffer. As we know, the Audionet engineers have never taken half-measures, but now they really think big. An essential factor is their proprietary »Ultra Linear Amplifier« technology. On the very shortest path the signal passes the newly developed input and output stages, which is said to have a positive effect on the transient behaviour. Phase and impedance critical loads can be driven without producing a nosedive in stability, and finally the distortions shall be kept on an extremely low level.

If the music transport does not happen on the pc board, it takes place via gold-plated lines of pure silver. After extensive listening sessions Audionet began already years ago to build their own OP amps, thereby focusing on the greatest possible bandwidth. Components from external suppliers had hardly shown any metrological differences in the development phase, but were useless under sound aspects. A number of the utilised parts, such as the mica capacitors, are made exclusively for Audionet in keeping with exact customer specifications. Because for two decades the company has been using those parts which are deemed more valuable for the sound, even if they are more expensive or harder to come by. With other manufacturers the rhodium terminals from Furutech and the micro fuse with a wire of the same material might have been blue-pencilled...

The volume can be adjusted in about eighty steps, the level setting is captured contact-free. The applied opto coupler offers the advantage that there is no electromagnetic influence like with a conventional

Review: Integrated amplifier Audionet Watt

Audionet redefines the subject of classic integrated stereo amplifiers, juicing up the Watt with the know-how from two decades.

New Sovereign

potentiometer. The actual level is then set via a network of metal film resistors.

This control also enables to navigate conveniently through the Watt's menu. Beside the display brightness and an individual name giving for the inputs, a programming for auto turn on and off may also be recorded here. Moreover, you can set the operating modes for a headphone and for devices which are connected via Audionet Link. The latter allows to comfortably turn on and off Audionet components which are con-



nected through fibre optics. So despite all that purism, there is still a good deal of convenience to be found. This is provided by the solid RC I metal remote control whose keys for level setting and input selection are easy to reach. You will also soon become familiar with the Mute button in between, which I use each time when the turntable is on, because in my view scrolling up and down the volume simply takes too long.

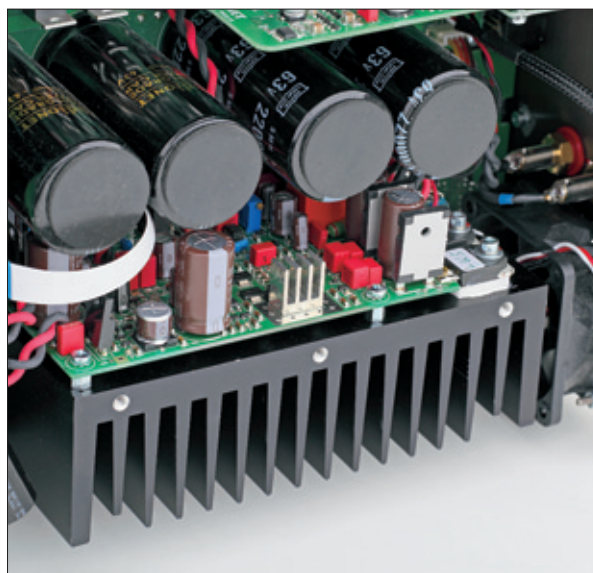
In the listening room the Watt was placed between the Clearaudio Anniversary analogue turntable and the Marantz SA-KI Pearl SACD player as signal sources and Franco Serblin's Ligneia and the KEF Reference 205/2 on the speaker

side. Due to our long-term experience with Audionet gear – after all, the DNP, EPX, AMP and SAM G2 are treasured components in the listening room equipment park – the Watt was granted three days of playing music at low volume to get ready for its performance.

With the help of a sound-optimising processing technology the Stockfisch label, which is known for high-class quality, has started to convert audio tapes into a DSD data stream. Thus, for instance, a recording from 1983 featuring guitarist Andreas Rohde will now go on sale as SACD. »Resonance« is an opus that's definitely worth listening to. With a high degree of naturalness the Watt goes about its work. Rohde, who is seated across from me, is hitting the strings in a relaxed mood – there is not even the slightest trace of blur between us. The unaffected mixture of fairly rounded, softly decaying notes

and the energetic picking on the 12-string guitar is amazing. I'm also pleased with the very stable sound, because compared to smaller integrated amplifiers this performance is absolutely sovereign. The instrument sounds neither too thin nor is it staged in a spectacular way. This is an authentical reproduction of the recorded music.

Now the SAM G2 may demonstrate its skills: clearly contoured and with pressure the rotor blades of a helicopter are clattering at the beginning of Sade's live recording »Paradise / Nothing Can Come Between Us«, the electric guitars join in with dirty gruffness until finally the bass takes the lead – simply gorgeous how the now little Audionet is treating this track. Everything's perfect – until that moment when the Watt assumes command. At first it's the wider spatial imaging and the more precise, yet not harder control of the loudspeaker which thrill me. After further comparisons it is clear that the Watt delivers a more substantial fundament. It conveys more information in the low range which benefits the bass line, because it gains enormously in body surface. Not least it gives the audience more substance, thereby increasing greatly the impact of the song.



The fact that the Watt is a machine designed for perfect music reproduction becomes obvious with Luka Bloom's »Heart Man«. Where other amplifiers hardly leave enough air for singing to the Irishman with the distinct voice, the Watt sets him free and reveals an openness and power in the reproduction which I haven't heard before. Regarding the character of this effect, it is equivalent to the stimulating sensation when you enjoy an espresso or a freshly

their best advantage. The Watt does not just paint the instruments in credible timbres, but adds to them a bodily palpability which otherwise I've known only from heavy-calibered pre/power amp combinations like the Dartzeels.

Moreover, what gives the reproduction an appealing touch is its acoustic character to not press the fulminant energy into the speaker in a rough-edged manner, but with an organic suppleness that many potent amplifiers don't show even



squeezed orange juice. Applied to the Watt this means that it does not merely amplify or simply warm up the music, but brings it to life in an honest and emotional way.

From this any music genre will benefit, yet natural instruments and also voices give the best proof of this splendid property. For example, when the Tord Gustavsen Trio performs »Edge Of Happiness«, even the tiny, delicate structures from the brushed cymbal, the gingerly acting bass and the piano, which stands clearly in the focus, come out to

rudimentally. Therefore higher levels are equally pleasant to listen to over the Audionet Watt – and who would want to hear »Thus Spoke Zarathustra« only at room volume? The double basses stand life-sized in rank and file, the wind players blare with great clarity and purity, whereas I can feel the tympani also physically. Using the terms faithful and realistic, the sound image of the Watt is also described correctly at this point, it even still smells of fresh paint.

Result

The Audionet Watt is a phantastic sounding integrated amplifier, based on a puristic concept that was realised by means of sophisticated technology and selected components. Though it emerges as a keeper of old virtues, the Audionet reveals how the times have changed, and here I'm not just talking about the new colour of the enclosure or the »disappearance« of the screws, but above all about the Watt's ability to reproduce music with consummate authority.

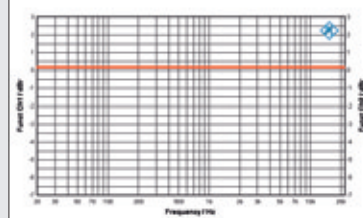
Olaf Sturm ■

Audionet Watt

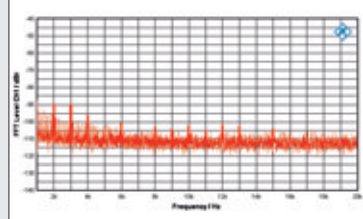
WxHxD	43 x 13 x 45 cm
Warranty	3 years
Price	12.500 Euros
Distribution	Idektron
	Alboinstraße 36 - 42
	12103 Berlin
Phone	030 - 2 33 24 21-0

Lab report

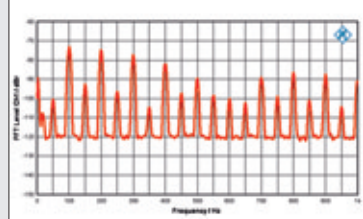
Frequency response: Audionet Watt



Harmonic distortion: Audionet Watt



Noise: Audionet Watt



Integrated amplifier Audionet Watt

Nominal output power 8Ω (1% THD)	163 W
Nominal output power 4Ω (1% THD)	324 W
Distortion (THD+N, 10W/4Ω)	0,0021 %
IM distortion (SMPTE, 5W/4Ω)	0,0027 %
IM distortion (CCIF, 5W/4Ω)	0,0010 %
S/N ratio (unweighted)	-86,9 dB
S/N ratio (A-weighted)	-94,0 dB
Upper cut-off frequency (-3dB/10W)	>185 kHz
Channel deviation	0,033 dB
Input impedance	45 kΩ
Idle power consumption	73 W

The Watt is a modern broadband, fast amplifier which offers plenty of power and a virtually perfect load stability. With it Audionet delivers proof that this quality is not reserved to the class D amplifiers alone. Its frequency response is dead straight, the very low distortions are negligible, the signal-to-noise specs are good. If the grid harmonics in the interference spectrum were a little lower, one might be able to tease out one or two more decibels here. But even so the Watt scores a »very good« in the lab. ■