



ONE TO CELEBRATE

The Italian manufacturer Audio Analogue and its „Puccini“ integrated amplifier are both celebrating their anniversaries – and to mark this there’s a special edition of the bestseller

The Puccini has an impressive history in the story of Italian manufacturer Audio Analogue: the company’s first product, the integrated amplifier is celebrating its 20th birthday, just like its creator – and to mark the occasion there’s a special Anniversary Edition, designed to take the amp to a new level.

It may be called a Puccini, but really the only thing this model has in common with its ancestors is that name. The greatest feature of the Anniversary amp is the

absence of any global feedback: while some designers attest to the use of feedback for its lowering of distortion and improved damping to improve dynamic capabilities, and thus musicality, the Italian team led by Claudio Bertini takes a contrary view.

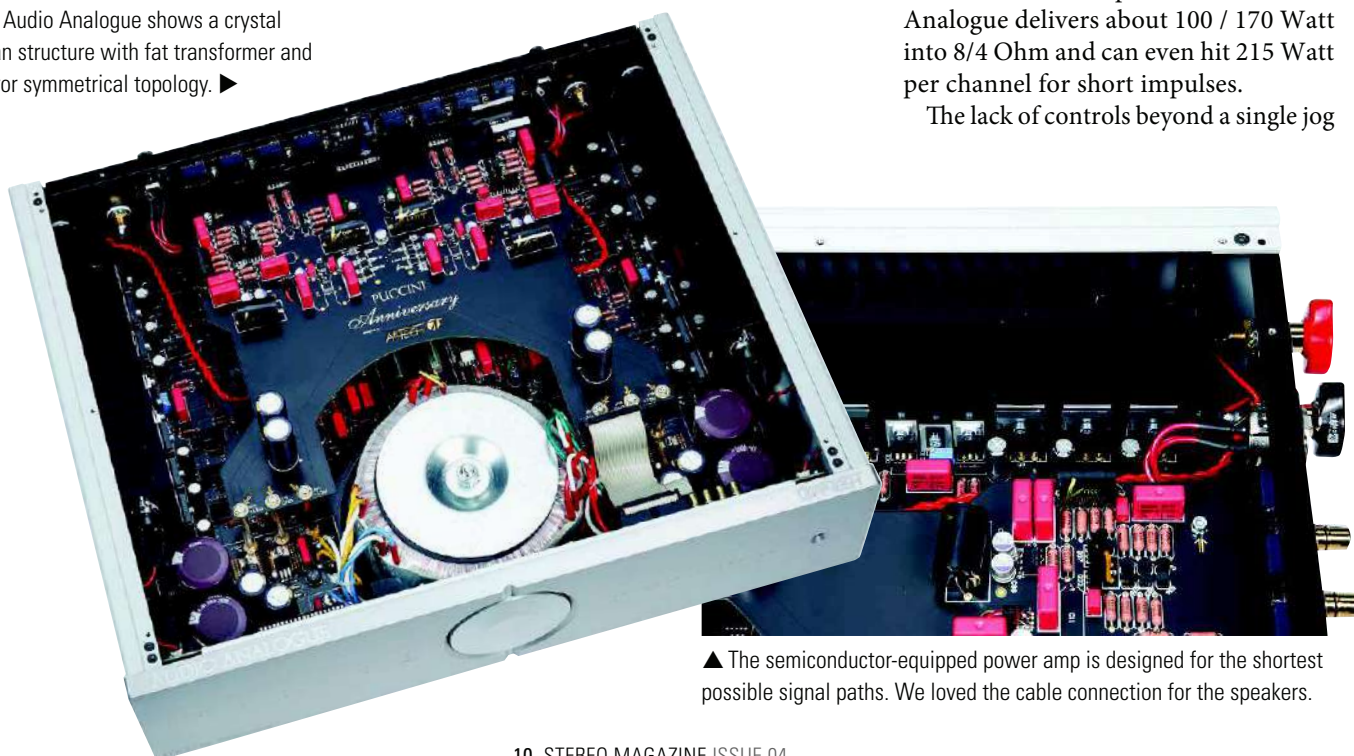
Indeed, it believes that the benefits of degenerative feedback – such as high input and low output impedance, stable amplification, power supply interference suppression, low distortion and

stability – can be better achieved with the intelligent selection of components (high-gain transistors, toroidal transformer) and alternative circuit designs (e.g. DC servo).

The trade-off is slightly worse measurements on paper, with both damping and distortion/modulation in a rather moderate – though definitely not critical – range. But as we said, this is on paper: this latest Puccini may give the kind of measurements commonly seen from tube amps, but amps in that class can’t match the output here. The Audio Analogue delivers about 100 / 170 Watt into 8/4 Ohm and can even hit 215 Watt per channel for short impulses.

The lack of controls beyond a single jog

The Audio Analogue shows a crystal clean structure with fat transformer and mirror symmetrical topology. ►



▲ The semiconductor-equipped power amp is designed for the shortest possible signal paths. We loved the cable connection for the speakers.

dial for both volume and source selection is initially irritating, especially considering that the necessary remote control also looks a bit confusing at first glance. After a brief adjustment period, however, it all does make sense.

And Audio Analogue also offers an interesting, if unusual, feature: the use of four digitally-controlled potentiometers in the volume section means it's possible to tailor the 'response curve' of the volume control to suit the speakers with which the amplifier is to be used. Four curves are available, for example offering greater volume increase at lower settings to suit speakers of low sensitivity, or a slower response for better control with highly efficient speakers. That's in addition to more prosaic adjustments such as channel balance and LED brightness, and indicative that, purist as the overall concept is, the Puccini is designed to be luxurious in its detailed functionality.

What's more, the new Puccini can take care of itself: in case of power amp overload left/right, overheating left/right, and DC Offset left/right, the protection system kicks in reliably and informs the user of the reason via a code on the LED front panel. We like this.

Opulent seducer

The Audio Analogue spent the most time in our listening rooms – purely by accident, as it returned from the photo studio before the others. So we had lots of time to get to know this heavy-hitter, and it quickly became apparent that it had virtues usually attributed to the tube amps, combined with transistor power. With Yello's "Oh Yeah" it dives deep into the bass with physical, fundamental

force, while Nils Lofgren's "Keith Don't Go" sees it throwing itself into the curves of the guitar body, depicting the instrument with tremendous solidity. Temperamental, full, spacious, lively, and yes, magnificent, possibly a little rounded instead of ultra-sharp, it soon demonstrates the appeal of its alternative to the analytic approach so often held up as the ultimate aim.

KEYWORD

Negative feedback: Circuitry correction device for amps, which counteracts distortion by comparing input and output, then sending a corresponding phase-inverted subtraction signal.

I personally prefer such an integrated top-rate experience to detail overkill, and I'm pretty sure the composer whose name the amplifier carries would see/hear things in the same way, and greatly enjoy the presentation here.

Not by coincidence, we kept noticing that the Audio Analogue was able to shake the smaller STEREO sound studio – of around 24m² – with a tremendous, seemingly four-dimensional wave of power. We can't recall any other amp being able to do that.

Even the already overwhelming presence of Amanda McBroom in "Dusk", "The Rose", or "The Portrait" became so addictive that we listened to all three in a row and then got annoyed that "When Hearts Collide" and "Dreaming" are on different, currently not available discs – all as a result of the seductive charm and revealing flexibility of the Puccini. The amp virtually screams for Luciano Pavarotti, and we serve the great man up as a "duet" with the boy band "Boyz-n-the-Band" in their live recording of "No Matter What They Tell Us", revealing a musical, empathetic amp with which you can grow old, combining warmth, melodiousness, and verve. The Puccini Anniversary is a highly musical, extremely impressive example of its kind – wonderful!



▲ The dual-mono structure continues all the way to the connection, making it logical that the power supply sits in the middle.

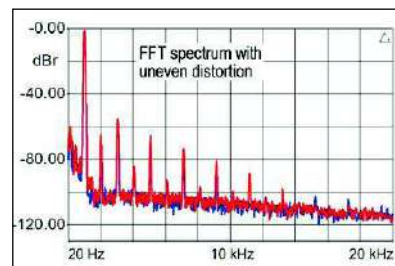
AUDIO ANALOGUE PUCCINI ANN.



approx. €3,850
Dimensions: 45 x 13 x 42 cm (WxHxD)
Warranty: 2 years,
Contact: Audio Analogue
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The Audio Analogue sounds like a tube-semiconductor hybrid, but it's all solid state: it's colorful, spacious, agile, powerful, and slightly warm. A great musical talent!

MEASUREMENT RESULTS



Continuous power at 8 Ω 4 Ohm 95/65 Watt per channel

Impulse power at 4 Ohm 215 Watt per channel

Distortion at

50 mW | 5 W | Pmax -1 dB 0.2 | 0.08 | 0.3 %

Intermodulation at

50 mW | 5 W | Pmax -1 dB 0.3 | 0.2 | 1.3 %

Signal-to-noise ratio CD at 50 mW | 5 Watt 67 | 77 dB

Channel separation at 10 kHz 53 dB

Damping at 4 Ohm 63/1k/14k (Hz) 33/30/27

Upper cutoff frequency (-3 dB, 4 Ω) >80 kHz

Load ratings practice-oriented

Crosstalk tuner/CD (10 kHz/5 kOhm) 64 dB

Timing error volume control up to -60 dB 0.05 dB

Power consumption

On / Standby / Idle 0 / <2 / 28 Watt

LAB COMMENTS: High output power with plenty in reserve. Distortion values and damping factor are moderate, which is part of the low negative feedback concept of the amps. The signal-to-noise ratio could be better.

EQUIPMENT

Remote control, four RCA phono high-level inputs and one balanced XLR in; central jog dial for volume control and input selection, further settings such as balance in setup via remote control. Connection for a pair of speakers, hard power switch.

STEREO-TEST

SOUND QUALITY 87%

PRICE/PERFORMANCE

★★★★☆
EXCELLENT