

Temptations

THE WORLD'S MOST DESIRABLE KIT

Pathos? It's a joy in our book

MONOBLOC POWER
AMPLIFIER
PATHOS ADRENALIN
MONOBLOC



£ 33,500/ pair

FOR

Astonishing sonic performance that excels in all areas; superb build and finish

AGAINST

Price puts it well out of the reach of most; runs hot; large and bulky

VERDICT

The Adrenalins sound as magical as you'd want for the money. Expensive, but in the right system they're worth every penny



POWER 180W
PHONO INPUT Yes
BALANCED INPUT Yes
BRIDGEABLE No
WEIGHT 70kg
DIMENSIONS 44x30x68cm

This is clearly the highest of hi-fi, affordable only by the extremely rich, but these Adrenalin monoblocs are simply stunning pieces of music-making magic

CAN ANY PIECE of hi-fi ever be worth 33 grand? In material terms, it's a hard thing to justify. After all, despite the masses of heat sinking, truly sturdy build and clever valve/transistor hybrid circuitry there's nothing hugely exotic about the ingredients used in these Pathos monoblocs. Justification becomes even harder when you hear just how capable power amplifiers are at a 10th of that price.

It looks, then, as though these Italian monoblocs are in for an uphill struggle. Right up until you hear them in a suitably talented system. At that point, the Adrenalins start to make perfect sense. They sound absolutely astonishing.

Composure isn't a particularly glamorous sounding quality, but the finest kit has enough to burn. Feed the Adrenalin the kind of material that normally has amplifiers struggling – we're talking about the likes of *The Dark Knight* OST with its massive dynamics swings and subterranean basslines – and these monoblocs deliver everything with absolute control, and an almost disturbing amount of ease. They never struggle, harden up or lose the rhythmic flow.

They're massive – but subtle too

The incredible thing about these amps is that all that control isn't at the expense of musical tension or excitement: those qualities are present and abundant, as long as the music has them to start with. Some products sound exciting or smooth or refined. The Pathos simply sound like the recording.

These are big amps, at 44cm tall by 68cm deep, yet the power rating doesn't seem outstanding. Many significantly cheaper power amps dwarf the 180-Watt-per-channel output. Indeed, our reference Bryston 4BSST almost doubles that at around a 10th of the price. Yet, play a large-scale piece of music and it's the Pathos that sounds markedly more authoritative

and delivers the deeper and punchier bass. While acoustic scale is as impressive as we've heard in our system, small-scale recordings such as Bonnie Prince Billie's *I See a Darkness* remain just as intimate as they should be: it's a difficult balancing act that few manage anywhere near as well.

And there's no sacrifice of finesse. The Pathos sounds beautifully natural and subtle when the music demands. With superb recordings (and rather fine music) such as *White Chalk* by PJ Harvey or Arvo Part's *Litany*, the lack of artifice and the delicacy are arguably as good as we've heard. And timing, tonal balance and speed are as good as they need to be. Without these qualities being spot on the

amplifier could never sound so convincing, so right, across so many genres of music.

An impact in many ways

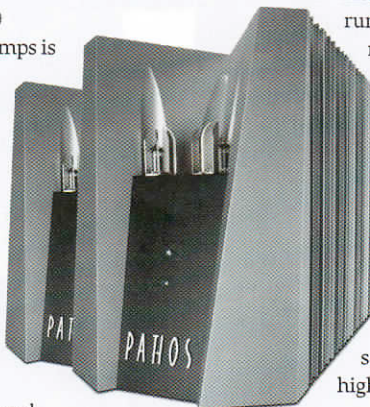
So, musically this amplifier is brilliant. That price tag will limit its appeal, but should it not put you off – lucky you – there are a few practical considerations to be aware of.

The Adrenalin is one heavy amplifier. Each monobloc weighs in at a vertebra-straining 70kg. You'll need at least two people to move them.

The Class A circuitry means they run very hot too. We doubt you'll need heating in a room with two of these running. So there's an environmental impact – and a quite significant electricity cost.

Yet, hear a set of these Adrenalins in full flow, and you may well forgive them that. These amps cost a huge amount of money, but, in the right system they unequivocally sound worth it. And that's the highest compliment we can give. ★

“Acoustic scale is impressive, yet small-scale recordings remain just as intimate as they ought to be”



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