

The world's most desirable kit

TEMPTATIONS

“A full dose of Pathos's distinctive DNA”

■ Pathos ClassicRemix HiDAC

Integrated amplifier

■ £2850 ★★★★★

Pathos has a habit of turning out imaginatively styled and fine-sounding amplifiers, and we're pleased to report that the ClassicRemix is yet another one. This well equipped compact integrated is one of the Italian company's more affordable models. But don't worry, it still delivers a full dose of the brand's distinctive DNA.

We can't think of another high-end electronics manufacturer that mixes the demands of aesthetics and performance as successfully as Pathos. One look at the ClassicRemix confirms it looks like little else on the market bar its pricier stablemate, the excellent InpolRemix.

There are two versions of this amplifier. The HiDAC, on test here, has a

full-size connections (for use with memory sticks or hard drives) and aren't active yet. Neither is the ethernet socket. These are included to accommodate a forthcoming digital board, the arrival of which we have no firm date for.

Headphones taken seriously

Most high-end amps tend to be stripped-down affairs, but along with the DAC module this Pathos also has a headphone output. It's a carefully designed amplifier circuit with a dedicated power supply, and the ability to deliver good amounts of current to drive a wide range of headphones.

Build quality is up to the usual high Pathos standard. The amplifier is a solid,

Don't be fooled by the minimalist look. It's not short of features

See overleaf for more detail...

This is refinement with enthusiasm: the ClassicRemix offers the kind of presentation that has us concentrating on the music rather than the specifics of hi-fi reproduction

built-in digital-to-analogue converter module - the 'basic' ClassicRemix doesn't. Going for the non-DAC version saves you £355 on the price we're quoting, but you'll also be missing out on a fine-sounding circuit.

Don't let the minimalist appearance fool you - the ClassicRemix isn't short of features. Alongside a good range of balanced and unbalanced analogue inputs you have digital feeds, including coax, optical and multiple USBs.

Don't get too excited about the three USBs and ethernet connection. Of these, only the Type B USB on the back actually works. The remaining USBs - one on the front, the other on the back panel - are

neatly finished package put together with the kind of care we would hope for considering the price. If you don't like the low-key black finish of our review sample, the amp is also available (for an extra £100) in a number of more luxurious options such as Zebrano wood, red, white or black lacquer.

We're pleased by the effort the company has put in to make things look good. Where most manufacturers are happy with basic fins for heatsinks, for example, Pathos has had them shaped to spell the company name. This may not be the most efficient shape for carrying heat away from the circuitry, but that's not a problem because the 'sinks don't

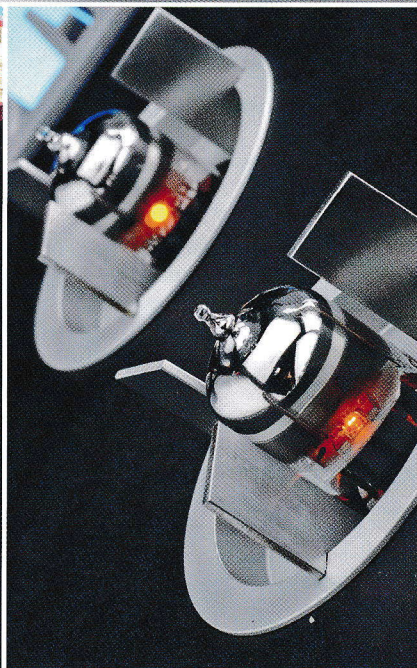
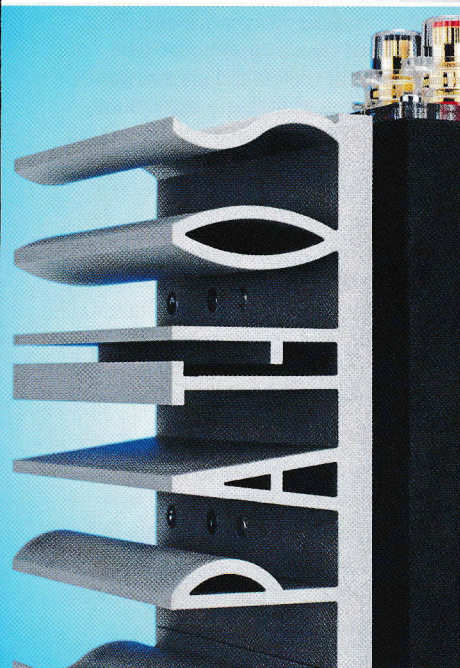
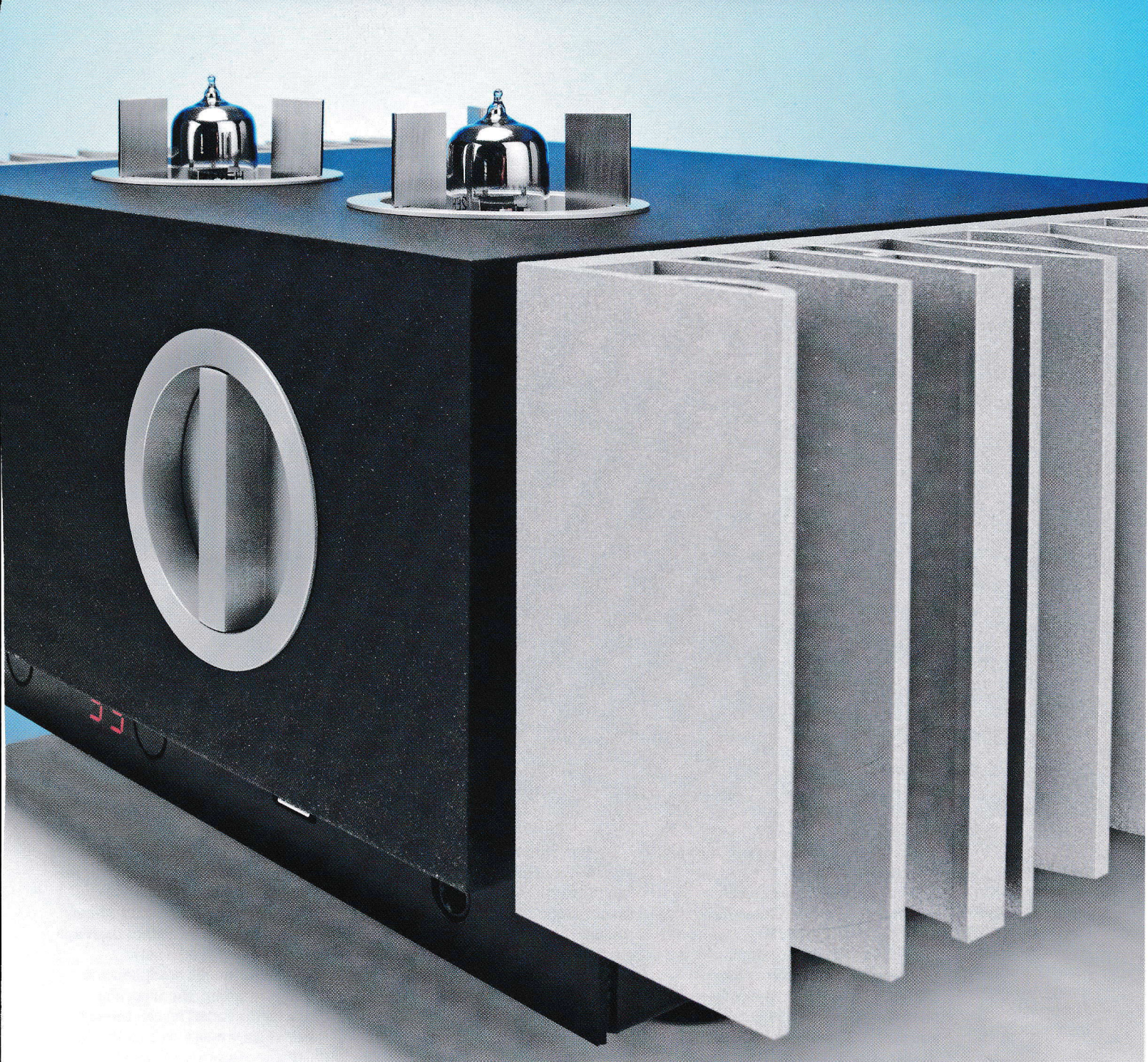
get too hot in use and, let's face it, look far more interesting in the process.

We like the remote too. It's a nicely sized, basic affair with just six control buttons. Interestingly, none of these are labelled, which feels a little awkward to begin with, but we think users will learn their functions soon enough.

Reliable formula

As is Pathos's way, the ClassicRemix uses a hybrid electronic circuit that mixes valves in the preamp stage with a 70W-per-channel Class A/B power amplifier. While that's not a huge amount of power, it is enough to get decent volume from most price-compatible speakers in anything but the largest of rooms. We got good results from Triangle's terrific Esprit Titus EZs, Audio Note Type Js and our reference ATC SCM50s.

There's a small digital display on a lower front-panel lip but, if viewed from



From far left: aesthetic considerations are never far from the Pathos designers' minds, as witnessed by the stylish heatsinks, fashioned to spell the company's

name; the twin valves sit in an elegant metal housing; the display is on the small side and partially hidden by the overhanging body. Front USB port is currently inactive



In detail



1 Over the years Pathos has become known for its skill in combining valves with transistors, thereby getting best of both worlds – sweetness and refinement but with a firm grip on the sound.

2 This is the HiDAC version of the ClassicRemix, and the DAC included therein is a surprisingly good one that gives admirable results from most digital sources. It's well worth the extra £355.

3 Only one of the two rear USB ports is active. The other one is intended for use with a digital board that has yet to be incorporated into the amp. The same goes for the Ethernet connection.

TECH SPECS

Type Integrated
Power output 70W
Inputs 5 x line level, USB
Outputs Preamp, speaker, headphone
Remote control yes
Finishes 5
Dimensions (hwd) 17 x 37 x 28cm

It might be modestly sized (and powered) but the ClassicRemix is not short of heft

above, it's hidden from view by the bulk of the top section.

Such practicalities are quickly forgotten once we start listening. We use a range of sources: digital is taken care of by the USB and optical outputs of a MacBook (loaded with Pure Music software) and the coaxial feed from our reference Naim NDS/555PS streamer. We also use our Clearaudio Innovation Wood turntable running through a Graham Slee ERA Gold/EXP phonostage.

The ClassicRemix is one of the most likeable amplifiers we've come across. It has refinement aplenty, but also a sense of enthusiasm that makes listening fun. It's the kind of presentation that has us concentrating on the music rather than the specifics of hi-fi reproduction.

We start with Bob Marley's *Exodus* on vinyl and are impressed with what we hear. The Pathos has a slightly sweet, rounded tone and plenty of body through the midrange, making the passion in Marley's vocals easy to hear. The amplifier's midrange is lovely; subtle, articulate and well projected.

Controlled force

Rhythmic drive is good too, the amp delivering the title track in a forceful and controlled manner. There's enough punch to satisfy and a good amount of attack to the leading edge of notes.

We try out the DAC next, playing a range of music from CD rips of Björk's *The Dull Flame Of Desire* and Dvořák's *New World Symphony* to a 24-bit/192kHz file of Hans Zimmer's *The Dark Knight Rises* soundtrack. We continue to be impressed.

The ClassicRemix works well across all types of music, having the punch to work well with Zimmer's bold approach and the subtlety to allow Björk's more low-key material to shine. There's plenty of insight here, and a nicely layered soundstage. A rival such as Naim's terrific SuperNait 2 has more grip at the lowest frequencies, but less fluidity through the midrange.

We give more compressed music a go and find that the Pathos is forgiving for so revealing an amp. Eminem's *Mockingbird* (192kbps) usually sounds harsh but through the Pathos the rough edges are rounded off neatly.

Listening through headphones is equally rewarding. The appealing character the Pathos reveals through speakers stays intact via both the Grado PS500s and BeyerDynamic T1s.

The ClassicRemix is a fine amplifier, and a great choice for someone who doesn't want their hi-fi dominating their room but still wants a top-class sound. It's usefully featured and is good enough to form the heart of plenty of top-class systems. We like this one a lot.

Consider if you want a built-in DAC and headphone output in a compact amp
Highlight The performance is excellent, but we also love the distinctive aesthetics

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Refined, yet entertaining sound; detail; timing; expressive dynamics; styling; build

AGAINST Some rivals deliver more low-end authority and scale

VERDICT A well built, fine-sounding amplifier for those who value style

