

Forever

Tell me what you are longing for, and I will tell you if you are mature and experienced enough for maybe the best amplifier the Accuphase engineers have ever devised. There are more powerful, cheaper and certainly even way more expensive ones than the A-70. For those who realize what the amplifier can do, dreams will become true. A case for high fidelity, a statement in amp building.

Once in a blue moon, the magazines stare into imaginary crystal balls: what does the future have in store for us, what products characterize trends, which technologies will prevail and what threatens to fall into oblivion? However, there's just a big snag to those beautiful trend reports: they are not true. Most forecasts of the past decades turned out to be all wrong. The vinyl record is alive, and how! No, surround could not supersede stereo and yes: amplifiers using the classic AB operation mode have not yet been fully replaced by the cold or cool digital amps. And some very few, very elitist ones may even be called class A amplifiers. In those amps a considerable proportion of quiescent current wants to eliminate any crossover distortions as a matter of principle. A certain Yasumasa Ishizuka who, together with his wife Christina, has made Accuphase what it is today, ranks among the few prophetes (... in fact, I really don't know of any other), who already in the 1980s predicted the future of high fidelity correctly. Back then he was asked if the development of conventional amplifiers had not yet come to an end. Although the Accuphase components of that era used to be the measure of all acoustic things, the wise man from Japan said 'no' and answered correspondingly that they were going to further develop the circuits and continue to approach the ideal in small steps. This pursuit of the truth would never end.

A statement against randomness

For whatever reasons, technical specifications, or a comprehensive documentation thereof, play an inferior role these days – sometimes not even that. Accuphase, this solid rock in the surf of randomness, makes a clear contra-statement in the form of a »brochure« which has appeared unchanged in style and language for decades. Can anyone accommodate more information on four pages? In partly tiny typography the Japanese engineers have meticulously listed how their sophisticated circuits basically work, which exquisite parts they use and how this can be measured as a result. In this glossy full color paper nothing is said about sound, catchy phrases are banned from print. The reading is neither free from assumptions nor of the »low-assumption« type. In any case an opulent picture of profound technical knowledge is conveyed, simply a »confidence-building« measure. This applies, of course, to the A-70 stereo power amplifier as well, which replaced the like-sized A-65 class A powerhouse some years ago. And here a »measured value«, which anyone can understand, enlightens how the Japanese define progress and development: the A-70 tips the scales at a hefty 1.3 kilograms more than its predecessor. By the way: the specific weight of the power amp amounts to a respectable 44.3 kilograms. Those who »undress« it to take a look inside, will get down on their knees in awe. More on this later.

Now let's listen into this power amp for a minute. Upon linking the A-70 to an excellent preamp, preferably from the same fine address, a special experience is going to come by: even if you »creep« into your speakers and with the unit turned on, without music modulation you won't hear »a thing«. No sizzling, zero hum, not even a faint noise. Jaw-dropping. Accuphase guarantees 121 dBs of signal-to-noise ratio, metrologically the A-70 even achieves an incredible 124 dBs. This superb and by no means academic figure is certainly also due to the new task allocation within the amplifier. The gist of the matter: whereas in the previous model the power section still provided the bulk of the work by contributing 16 to the 28 dBs of overall gain, the A-70 turns the job description upside down. The power department now delivers a mere 6 dBs as opposed to 22 dBs in the preamp (A-65: 12 dBs). So altogether we still have the afore-mentioned 28 dBs, only produced by using different ways. »What's the point of it all?« To optimize the S/N ratio: so simple, technically masterful and beneficial in daily use is the way in which Accuphase designs. The fact that the Japanese painstakingly select all ingredients of their components, shall be mentioned here for the sake of completeness. This, of course, is also true for the 10 field-effect transistors (so-called MOS-FETs) working in push-pull mode per channel; in total Accuphase employs 40 of these.

Cover on: listen and be amazed

With two times 60 watts of power into 8 ohms the A-70 seems to be allegedly modest in output. But only the performance yield in class A mode is propagated. Apart from that, this amp can also comfortably pump 574 watts per channel into a near-short-circuit 1 ohm. Talking about safety: the sophisticated protection circuit which is built around MOS-Fets reliably prevents damages – even if the speaker wires should touch each other by mistake. We had reported on the stillness before the power. But when suddenly, virtually out of »nowhere«, music can be heard in a colorfulness and vividness, absolutely free from artefacts, one may quite justifiably speak of a great moment. It's just that everything had to fit perfectly. Trying to run the A-70 with a non-Accuphase preamp delivered indeed very good results, but (alas) not this excellent one. Considering the fact that Accuphase components are sometimes said to reproduce music in a pure and fine way, but behave a little statically at that, such estimates were downright absurd. If I had run into such a combination prior to my journalistic occupation, I might possibly have stucked to my old profession: search completed, goal achieved.

Those who decide to go for an A-70, must hence think about an adequate preamp sooner or later as well – or own it already, in which case any hesitation or wavering should be out of the question. »Enrich life through technology« is the Accuphase motto. What reads as a pithy marketing slogan at first sight, will become more and more palpable and comprehensible in the course of the involvement, the experience and the newly gathered knowledge about music and technology. This is what high fidelity is about after all: that technical devices bring performers and their music so close to us that they do not only reach our ears, but also our hearts.

What a blessing in our frantic, exhausting, burdensome time: that they still do exist, the really fine things which motivate us to keep going, at least for some hours every day.

Joachim Pfeiffer