

Test by Cai Brockmann/Fidelity

Accuphase E-600

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THE GOLD STANDARD

Since four decades the brand with the rolling “A” stands for everything, what makes High End really valuable. For the first time you can dream with this Accuphase model E-600 about “2 in 1”.

He should be full of trust , the ideal High Ender. He can turn any time to his trustworthy retailer specialist. He also can give him with full confidence a high sum of money. This is how the High End Scene is functioning and this is ok. Or better: this is how the scene should function. The customer is looking for the best for his money, and he has some idea as to the budget. The specialized retailer, offering hopefully the best, is his partner. A real specialist. A full range of products. Friendly service provider and a competent HiFi-travel expert in one person.

Do you know what? I do not only know a lot of “Searchers”, I also know some of such retail specialists. Noticeable often they offer a certain brand in their portfolio. And if one has gained a deep look behind the scenery, then it is no wonder that those machines have almost always a light golden shimmer, have an absolutely stylish family appearance and always are equipped with a respectable price tag. Not at all a question: Accuphase is a real institution on the High End Market.

Naturally also the competence of the specialized retailer does not come out of nowhere. But from the exact opposite, from a highly serious, extremely engaged distributor. You would say, this is very old school? Exactly this is what it should be! Behind the trustworthy specialist with his favorite brand Accuphase stand the concentrated power of a distributor, who is in public accentuated conservative. This I respect of course. Therefore I only mention a

small detail what indicates something: P.I.A. is the German distributor of Accuphase without interruption since the formation of the company ca. 40 years ago (once again for writing: since 40 years) and despite of this the sworn

in, unbending P.I.A. team would never, really never foreground themselves. A point of honor.

With the simply fact, that things at Accuphase are arranged from the very beginning extremely seriously and clean and also furthermore designed for constant quality, we can now turn to a totally new product from the same manufacturer. The E-600 is from now on the top model of total 4 integrated amplifiers of this brand. It replaces the E-560, introduced five years ago and so much looks alike it, that even Accuphase experts must have a very close look. Well, the weight of the E600 is 700g more than his predecessor. But also this difference does not really make a difference at a total 25 kg weight. More interesting are the nuances Accuphase positions its new model in its portfolio. Naturally the ambitioned E-600 shall represent again the technically feasible of the integrated amplifier-future, this time however the 600 aims at – perk up your ears – “the higher performance level of separate components”.

It is interesting that the E-600, despite of its increased own standard, is not more expensive, but a bit cheaper. By all means a fine move, especially because the technical packages is not at all smaller.

The E-600 is traditionally so opulently equipped, that in this respect you could think back into the fabulous 70th. After a short first inspection an avowed traditionalist would miss only the turntable input, the new age people however a digital board. Both, of course , is not a problem, the amplifier is at best prepared, what means for both cases. In the market typical mixture of professional Sound-studio technic and High –End-touching quality, one can configure the E-600 with the fitting modules for each personal requirement. Also further line inputs are available. The assembly respectively exchange of such modules is a work of seconds. I love something like this.

In fact I catch myself out after I put the amplifier into the rack, that I develop a fun to push here and turn there, to gently close and open the push button of the striking front panel , to switch the display on and off. Especially the volume

control I really like. How it feels to touch, to turn and operate, this creamy-turning adjusting knob with a full left and right impact, this is a real pleasure. To be precise, this volume control is not only the haptic prominent interface between human being and machine (sorry dear provided remote control, but with the dream-part your rocker cannot compete) it symbolizes the standard of Accuphase, to beautify the life of a music lover and HiFi-fans. With me it worked at once. I am happy about each turning movement, even if it is very

small. Although a small display shows each positioning of the loudness value additional in text form, what e.g. makes the finding of a certain positioning much easier. No, a better solution I have never experienced. And never listened to also: behind the simply-beautiful, and exactly having the right dimension of the adjusting knob is the extremely complex AAVA-Volume -Control. This "Accuphase Analog Vari-gain Amplifier" was once developed for the non plus ultra pre-amplifier. In the meantime it is now in all the amplifiers of the manufacturer. The clear audible advantage of this extremely low noise fine-adjustment mechanism with more than 65000 "steps" – that means with full analog feeling over the total regulating width – was obviously too inviting, that the manufacturer could have dispensed it. AAVA is for me "Enrich life through technology" in pure form.

Detailed like this I could now swarm of ca. two dozen more Accuphase specialities. In the meantime the E-600 – by the way no stand by function, but a classic "hard" power switch – has reached its working temperature. It wants to start. And its perfectly fitting playing partner Accuhase DP-550 as well. But the accompanying SACD Player is not yet everything, what the "full supply" on the part of Accuphase relates to. Between player and amp an Accuphase-connecting cable is employed. During the coming weeks this cable did not declassify some praised and all high priced cables, but in the overall view the Accuphase cable outperforms the others. For those two "gold pieces" I simply cannot find any better one than those unimpressive cinch-cables.

And now I finally reached the decisive question, what moves a music lover like me: how does it sound? What sound-character I can expect from the E-600? The counter question after using different speakers is obvious: How does

superiority basically sound? How does straight High End really sound? Because the E-600 does not lower its guard sound wise at all, not a single time.

And it feels good, how the Class-A-Amplifier "guarantees" nominal 30 Watts per channel /8 ohm, what you can double in best Accuphase tradition to 4 ohm, a modern time 2 ohm even quadruplicate. This is for most loudspeakers a really adequate quantum.

The as tall as a man high Focal Maestro Utopia e.g. an electro-acoustic magnifying glass with the highest claim from its suppliers, the E-600 makes it dance and tremble and shining. The tiny, enormous forthcoming KEF LS 50 accumulates with the Japanese to such high performance, what I never trusted in the coaxial-British. Thanks E-600! Only when it is very loud in the base, when

you need pure power (and not sound quality), then the E-600 reports – from the very well designed and well to read from a precision-measurement instrument on the front – that it is time to make a left turn on the beloved volume knob. And immediately the extreme transparent room-ambience is fully restored, the musicians are standing exactly in the right place. It is fascinating how one can follow the smallest details into the depth of the room. One can practically see holographical into the concert hall and will be diving into the hidden sound-puzzles of Roger waters or Boris Blankj (Yello) and inspire – the enjoyment is huge, erupts again and again very sudden from apparent known recordings and naturally is totally on my side. With properly efficient and wide-band loudspeakers it seems nearly limitless – as to room and as to level as well.

In fact it is very difficult to imagine, yes, I really doubt, that sound wise there should be “more” possible above this prestigious integrated amplifier. I do not miss anything, I feel totally comfortable in the company of this great Amp, and enjoy that he “delivers” any order pico bello clean. In fact I do not see any concrete occasion to change to separate components from the manufacturer. In this respect the demand of the new flag ship, to be in the waters of the bigger brothers and sisters, if fulfilled.

Under HiFi points of view the Accuphase E-600 must be submitted under universal tool. In the best sense classical tool of profis (and music lovers), who

are open to modern times, and welcome this professional, well thought and sovereign ! The optima module DAC-40 with its three digital-inputs e.g. sounds much better than its price tag suggests, also the phono-card AD-30 – both fitting therefore perfectly with E-600 and one can any time upgrade: the future can therefore come.

It is this striking, unspectacular, everything penetrating authenticity, at the same time the absence of any euphoric and other artificial sweetener, that raises the E-600 quasi to the dimension of all ambitious integrated amplifiers. Even if I would work as “financial advisor” not for High End Audio, but in the asset management, I would define and quote the E-600 as the new Gold Standard!
