

Accuphase Integrated Amplifier E-213

Silent Running

by Dalibor Beric

An Accuphase amplifier of the E-200 series has ever since been the "dream machine" of many audiophile music lovers. The new E-213 is now the culmination of the virtues this series of integrated amplifiers had to offer.

Silence can be very impressive. It will move you when you are to realise how little one can hear during a calm night in the desert. And it is nevertheless remarkable as to how ones ears are becoming more and more sensitive. In such a silence the ear will switch to a very fine perception: you are inclined to hear single grains of sand rubbing against each other.

Something very similar can be experienced after having switched on the Accuphase E-213 because this amplifier is to convey nothing but silence. No mechanical transformer hum, no noise but simply silence. Initially one tends to believe that is not at all switched on. Well, any owner of an Accuphase will smile here because he's surely familiar with this fascinating fact. And we from **Stereoplay** did savour this silence the last time when we tested the E-308 in November 2004.

Certainly, achieving this stunning silence requires more than a carefully designed circuitry. Although the E-213 is - in the tradition of Accuphase - outstandingly equipped with respect to parts and components on the boards, the new circuit topology dubbed MCS plays a most important role here. The amplifier stages are in fact doubled and power transistors in parallel configuration are taking care of the music signal whilst decreasing noise and augmenting linearity. Like in the big brother E-308 this proprietary circuitry principle has been employed in the pre-amplifier section as well as in the input stage of the power amplifier. In the pre-amp of the E-213 however Accuphase have employed highest-quality op-amps whereby in the E-308 this part of the circuitry has been elaborately composed of single transistors. No small wonder though if one considers the difference in retail prices.

On the other side you'll appreciate the pleasing "tactile feel" the E-213 is able to convey, because, after all, this amp is nevertheless meant to be the entry level to the wonderful world of Accuphase: just experience yourself how smoothly the potentiometer can be turned and you may then joyfully listen to the full "click" of the input selector when switching to another source! It goes without saying that both can be comfortably operated also via the supplied remote control right from the cosy armchair in your listening room.

There is something new in the E-213 namely that it features an input for an external pre-amplifier. Accordingly labelled "EXT-PRE" a handy rotary switch at the front panel allows you to use the E-213 as a pure power amplifier only. In a surround system, for example, where the E-213 would be connected to the outputs of a multi-channel preamplifier. All this without the risk of degrading the overall sonic qualities of the existing stereo system.

As everybody knows, the more recent (integrated) amps from Accuphase come with a modular-built input section, i.e. there are various so-called option boards available to meet the individual needs of music lovers. This applies to the E-213 also. You can make your choice among the high-level input boards Line-9 or Line-10, the phono-modules AD-9 or AD-19 or the digital converter board DAC-10. The latter may not only be useful for DVB-tuners with digital outputs but also for the sonic benefit of many CD players out there. This board accepts both digital and optical signals whereby it is automatically switched to electric digital if the input sees no optical signal.

For the listening test we employed first the phono-boards AD-9 and AD-10 connected to the Nouvelle Platine Verdier with Linn Ekos tonearm and Lyra Titan pickup cartridge. At the other end we had our reference speakers Avalon Eidalon N. A combination which sounded absolutely convincing in **Stereoplay's** listening room! In "Northstar Blues" by Magnolia Electric Co the E-213 rendered the voice of Jason Molina wonderfully three-dimensional and realistic whilst the guitar could be heard with just the right amount of wood tones without subduing the delicate oscillations of the strings.

THE FINISH

Besides the MCS circuit topology Accuphase have put a lot of effort into a solid and fully developed quality. For instance the enclosed power transformer which can deliver 400 VA with ease. 2 x 22000 µF in the massive electrolytic capacitors are likewise more than just pretty words. Then we encounter some very expensive input relays featuring gold-plated dual- contacts made of silver. Well, this is perhaps a speciality that owners of the E-213 may appreciate only in many years to come because they would never cause any problems.

It's also fact that Accuphase's current feedback topology works substantially more accurate than a feedback loop based on voltage regulation. Eventually details of the Accuphase-quality can - apart from the mechanical properties - be recognized only at a second glance: for example in a circuit board layout that has been continuously improved over decades and now brought to perfection.

In addition we can say that the E-213 could clearly demonstrate the differences between the reasonable AD-9 and the sonically superior AD-10.

Of course the E-213 was given some digital food, too, whereupon it excelled with true sound colours and a fantastic pin-point rendition of single instruments and voices. We liked this so much indeed that there was actually no way around a cross-check with its bigger brother E-308. Well, only by this comparison it dawned on us that the ambitious newcomer may have reached its limit. Although the fine sonic character of the E-213 came very close to that of the E-308, it did not quite get to the overwhelming and three-dimensional sound picture of the latter.

This is actually speaking for the strict sonic hierarchy in the house of Accuphase: you pay more, you get more (sound)! In any case the E-213 is the new gemstone in the 200 series. With brilliant sound and impressive overall craftsmanship it has set a new benchmark in its price class.