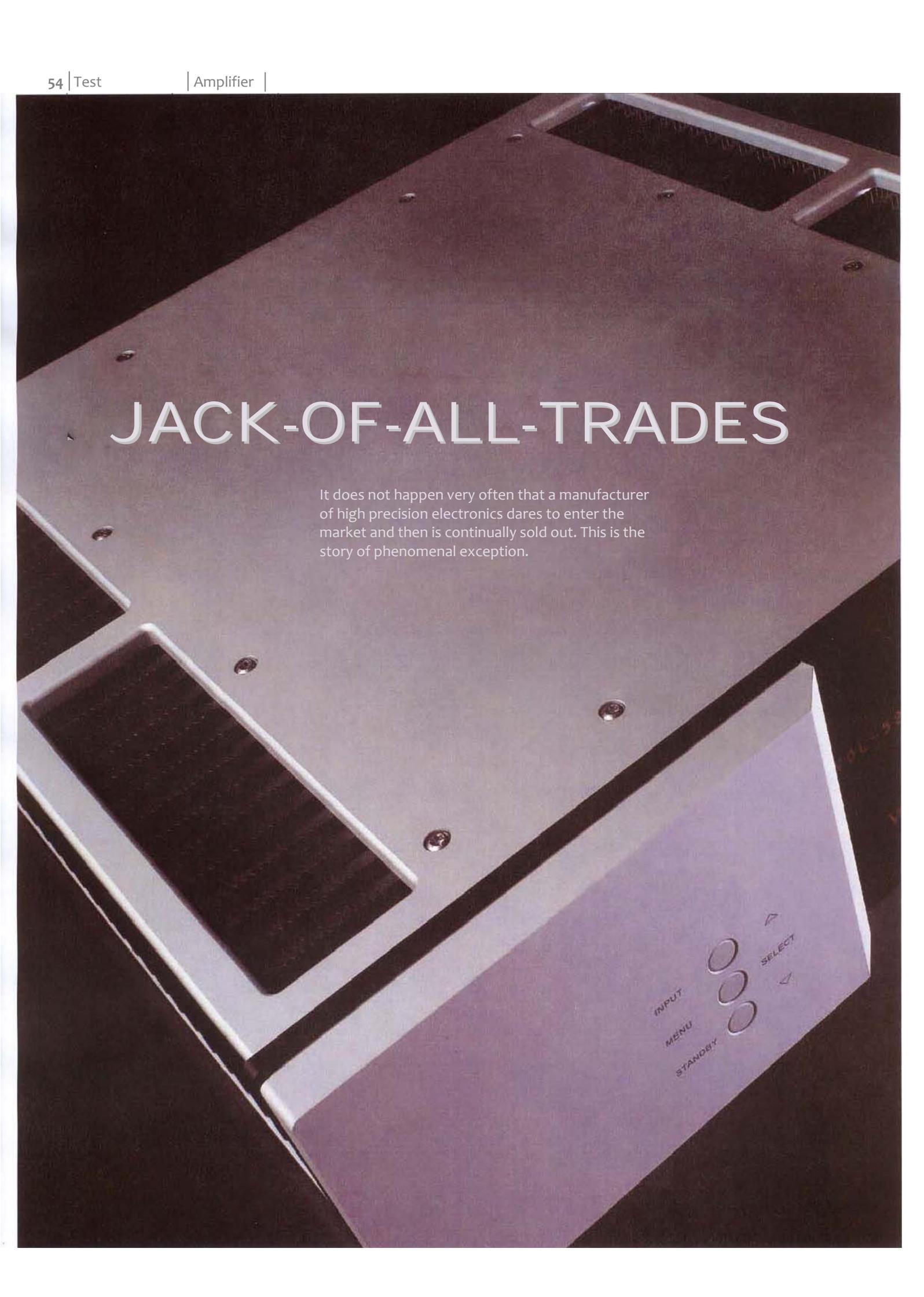
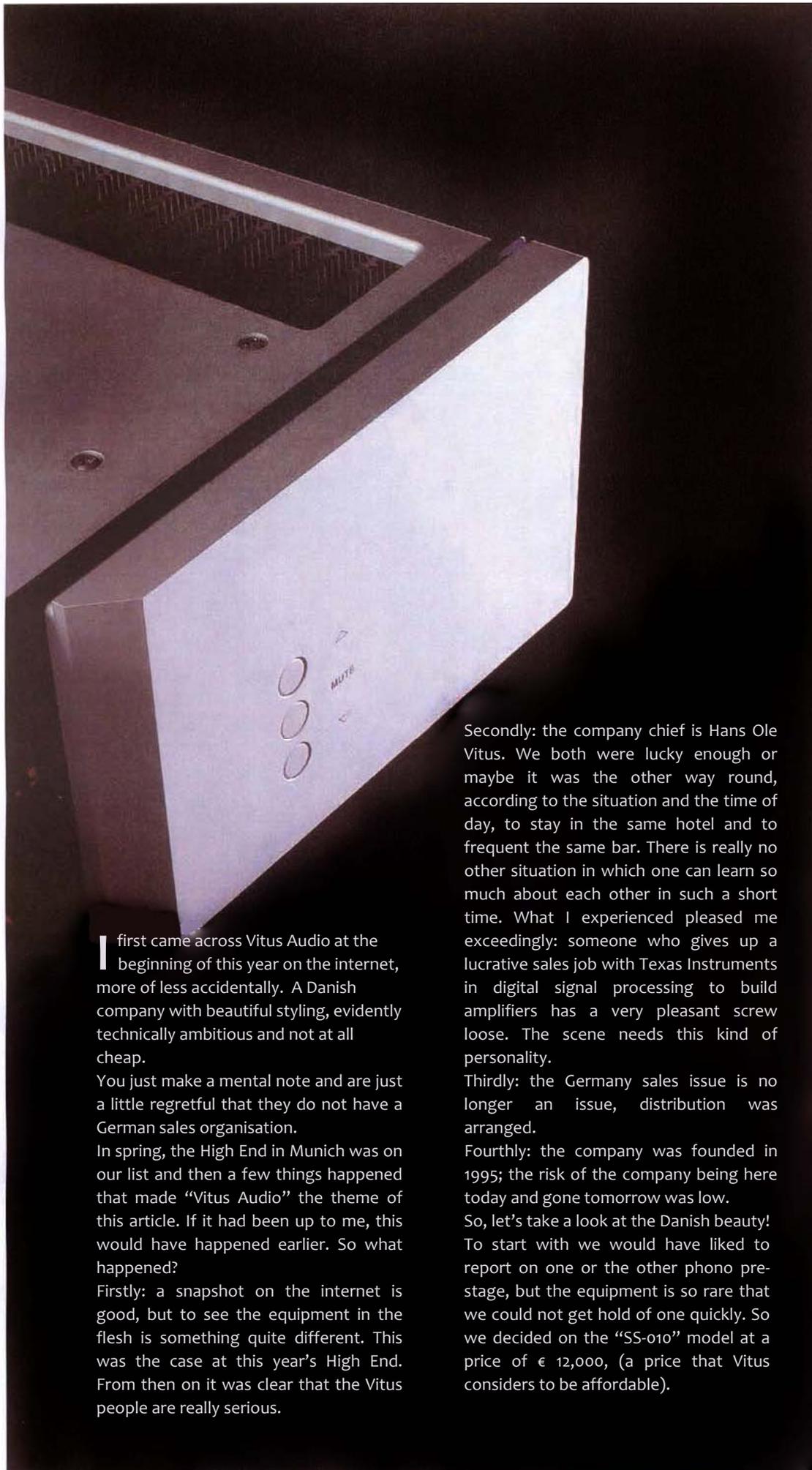


JACK-OF-ALL-TRADES

It does not happen very often that a manufacturer of high precision electronics dares to enter the market and then is continually sold out. This is the story of phenomenal exception.



INPUT
MENU
STANDBY
SELECT
SELECT



I first came across Vitus Audio at the beginning of this year on the internet, more or less accidentally. A Danish company with beautiful styling, evidently technically ambitious and not at all cheap.

You just make a mental note and are just a little regretful that they do not have a German sales organisation.

In spring, the High End in Munich was on our list and then a few things happened that made "Vitus Audio" the theme of this article. If it had been up to me, this would have happened earlier. So what happened?

Firstly: a snapshot on the internet is good, but to see the equipment in the flesh is something quite different. This was the case at this year's High End. From then on it was clear that the Vitus people are really serious.

Secondly: the company chief is Hans Ole Vitus. We both were lucky enough or maybe it was the other way round, according to the situation and the time of day, to stay in the same hotel and to frequent the same bar. There is really no other situation in which one can learn so much about each other in such a short time. What I experienced pleased me exceedingly: someone who gives up a lucrative sales job with Texas Instruments in digital signal processing to build amplifiers has a very pleasant screw loose. The scene needs this kind of personality.

Thirdly: the Germany sales issue is no longer an issue, distribution was arranged.

Fourthly: the company was founded in 1995; the risk of the company being here today and gone tomorrow was low.

So, let's take a look at the Danish beauty! To start with we would have liked to report on one or the other phono pre-stage, but the equipment is so rare that we could not get hold of one quickly. So we decided on the "SS-010" model at a price of € 12,000, (a price that Vitus considers to be affordable).

Members of the Team

Record player:

Phono pre-amplifier:

Loudspeaker:

Competitors

Pre-amplifier:



Gespieltes

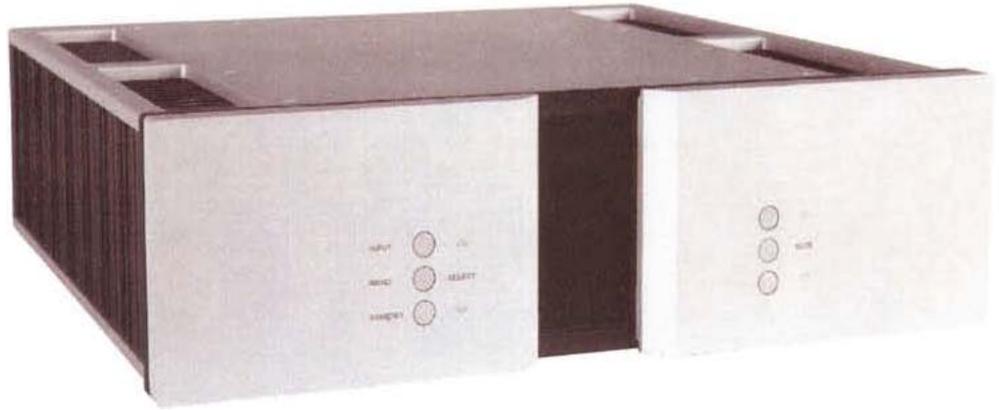
Rickie Lee Jones

Lambchop

ZZ Top

Counting Crows

Eva Cassidy



More elegance is hardly possible in a full-range amplifier; tastefully dressed heat sinks, discreetly integrated user panel, a well-disguised simple text display.

To say which category the machine belongs in is really not easy - a full-range amplifier or a final stage - depending on the operation mode. For us, this is a perfectly stylish full amplifier of a very special species: there are namely - and this is where the final stage shows itself - only two inputs, a symmetrical and an asymmetrical. Asking Hans Ole (known as Vitus) - whether this is perhaps a little scant, one gets a short, healthy, self-confident response. The XLR input belongs exclusively to the proprietary CD player, so another source is not necessary. If anybody really wants something else then the cinch inputs are there. The proprietary symmetrical phono pre-amplifier is so expensive anyway that it belongs in any case to the bigger Virus Audio pre-/final stage combis. As you will, dear Vitus. We have enough phono pre-amplifiers so if we can't have one from you (yet), then we will add on our few precious tried and tested examples. Also symmetrically, the CD player can be connected to fall to pieces at the cinch input ... The products from Vitus Audio have been available internationally for quite some time and now because Germany, a European key market has been added, the availability of product has not improved. Indeed, it seems to be that the devices are being practically snatched out of the Danes' hands and for a small company this causes a good deal of work as they almost exclusively produce a hand-made product. But what is the attraction of this equipment?

At this time, the quality is not only of a high level in comparison to competitors, the level is probably the present industry benchmark.

The S 5-010 consists of thick, extravagant glass pearl blown aluminium plates, the clearances are perfect, nothing sticks, nothing snags and additionally the equipment is a feast for the eyes. The heat sinks are hidden tastefully under the floor and the lid plate; these are disguised by black transparent acrylic glass that houses the six operating keys in the middle of the front and edged by two massive aluminium profiles. Simply very pretty and very high value, as is appropriate for the price. The sceptre in the SS-010 oscillates a micro-controller that in turn enables a very high degree of user comfort, for there is far more going on here than just changing of the volume and selecting the input signal. You can choose between two different operating modes, for example, between "real" class-A mode and a mode that is a little more efficient, class-AB. The class-AB mode allows the standing current to be altered; there is no change at the output power side. In both cases this is a generous 25 watt at eight Ohm. What? You think this is a little low for a 35-kg high-calibre projectile? Wait and see. The output power of an amplifier is presumably still the most overestimated parameter; musicality is born in ranges of very low power and not at high outputs. The A-settings of the SS-010 are in any case of the "real" kind, this can be seen in the power level: it helps itself to about 150 watt from the power socket and that is constant - either without signal or in A mode. In AB mode without load only 57 watt is needed. This mode is predefined and it is recommended by Vitus as an extended stand-by condition, from here the amplifier in A-mode is considerably faster in reaching full operation than from the real stand-by mode.

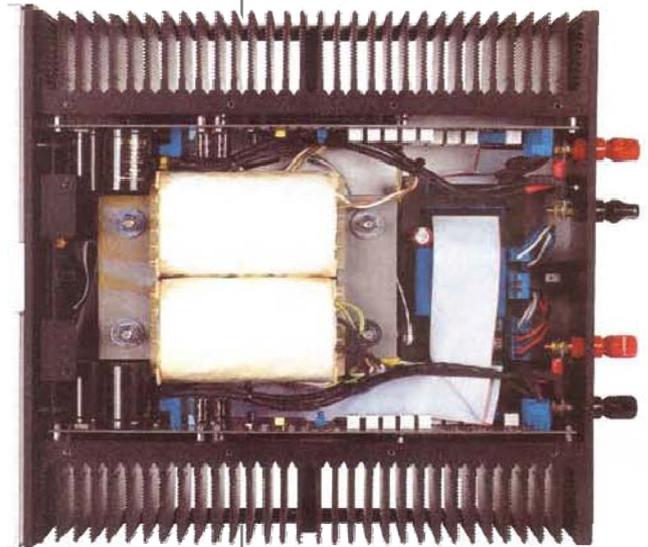
In the SS-010 just two final transistors per channel do all the work

Additionally, using the menu functions, the relay volume adjustment functions can be changed, the inputs can be given names, the kind of display can be selected and the display brightness adjusted. And there are other luxury gadgets, too. Remote control? Naturally, and this comes in the form of a voluminous touch screen transmitter - type Philips "Pronto". This does not reach the excellent haptics of the main equipment, however it functions faultlessly and is delivered completely programmed by the manufacturer, with all control codes for Vitus equipment. In the future Vitus will offer also their own remote control, it will be consistent with the company product and philosophy. A glance to the apparatus back reveals a pair of excellent loudspeaker solder less terminals which seems to be made from copper and ready to accept both banana plugs and cable shoes. A pair of XLR input sockets, a pair of cinch terminals; essentially that is it.

Richer in content is the interior of the equipment. In the middle and not to be overlooked, the lion's share of the avail-

able space is taken up by an enormous power transformer, the largest that has ever been built in to a full amplifier. This gigantic high-power transformer does not have a toroidal core; instead it has actually a "U1" metal lamination stack. Vitus is particularly proud of the transformer and attests that the transformer is responsible to a large degree for the quality of the equipment. That

being said, toroidal core transformers are in the main compact and inexpensive, they are however of a lesser quality and their construction is clearly inferior. I would not dare to contradict this claim in view of the fact that this monster high-power transformer is oversized by a factor of 10.



This is a real power transformer: The SS-010 high-power transformer has possibly record-breaking dimensions.



Special praise must also be voiced for the excellent copper loudspeaker terminals because they promise the best contact and because they can be tightened properly.

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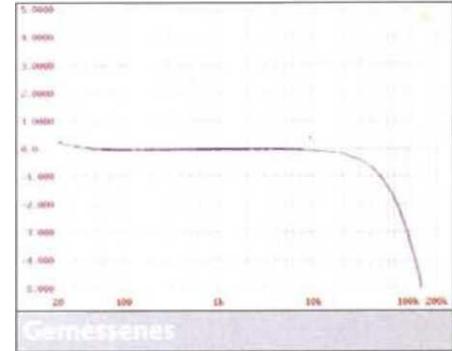
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The amplifier circuitry is realized on a single printed circuit board on the lateral heat sinks, naturally with external canal separation. The volume adjustment consists of 18 relays and a whole row of SMD resistances. The function is a little different than is usual because in operation, only one single resistance is always switched directly to the signal path and then only switched as needed; the purist would say that a signal path is non-existent at this point. The power stage gets by with merely two transistors of the famous ring emitter type, from Sank. The topology of the wiring cannot be easily decoded thanks to the modern SMD design. Also it is clear that the design calls for discrete semiconductors and that each stage has separate parallel voltage regulators with stabilised operating voltages. Also on passing we can state that taking the equipment to pieces to inspect a final stage block was pleasantly uncomplicated.

For our test, a set of Vitus' own connector cables of type "Andromeda" were put at our disposal, these undoubtedly produced excellent results although the price level lies in less happy regions. We wanted nevertheless to test the equipment under optimal working conditions and therefore let it play in a "local environment".

Right from the beginning I can say: What you will not miss in the least in this equipment, is output power. Far more, the lumen white "Silver Flame" connected to the Vitus full amplifier delivered the finest 25 Watt that has ever reached our ears. The machine is a classic example of the qualities which are only attested by a real class-A amplifier and this at the highest level. The Vitus acts as swiftly as an arrow, relaxed and lively and transports unbelievable amounts of micro information into light of day. Its



Comments on measuring technology

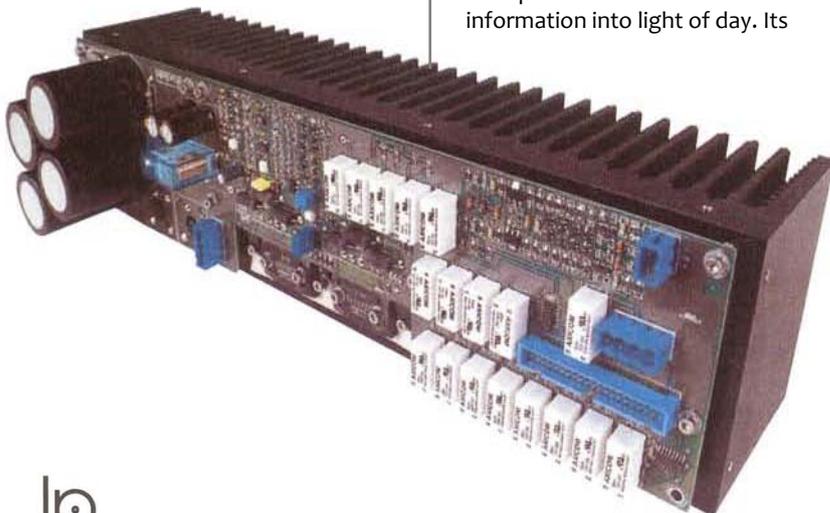
The Vitus full amplifier did not show any weaknesses in the laboratory. The frequency response (image) has no negative features and has a correct broadband behaviour; the 3 decibel point is at about 100 kilohertz. Regarding performance, a clean 26 watts per channel at 8 ohm, 46 at 4 ohms. The distortion factor at 5 watts at the output is 0.05 percent in class-A operation, 12 per cent with AB operation. The un-weighted signal-to-noise ratio is 84.9 decibel (A) in A operation and 91.2 in AB mode. The stand-by current consumption of merely 1.3 watts is pleasantly low, in operation nearly 150 Watt; the output in full operation at 4 ohm is 200.

dynamic gait has fine manners; it offers quantities of power which it does not present without restraint; the dust-dry brutality of some high power amplifiers has nothing to do with the Vitus where timing always comes before "punch". Control is not an issue; it is a distinguishing feature. This is not an amplifier that forces a loudspeaker like it would be in a vice; it speaks to the membranes with great charm and explains the course to be taken. In this respect one can certainly compare it with a very good valve amplifier and not at all with typical colleagues from the semiconductor guild. The lumen is certainly an extremely bass potent loudspeaker that masters with great ease also the most demanding deep tonal challenges in the Vitus.

This is also true of spatiality and the immense depth that fills each small and insignificant tone with enthusiasm, cleanly separated from the rest of what's happening. Quite clearly an amplifier which copes very well with difficult music material. For me again

Without the resistance of the start-up current limitation, the transformer would be undoubtedly the death of every household safety switch.

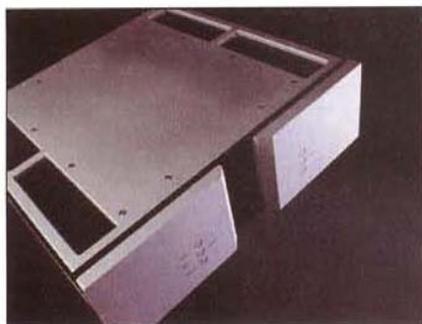
All in all included, the final stage module also houses the volume adjuster as well as the filtering and rectification of the operating voltages.



and again, evidence of this pleasure is "Coolsville", a title from Rickie Lee Jones' first album. If everything is not just right: Miss Jones' voice squawks unabashed and the solid piano beats get an unbearable undertone - nothing like this here: the Vitus equipment carries the voice confidently and lightly; bursting with energy - but not irritating - it should be so - exactly so.

All these impressions are primarily valid for the operation in Class-A mode, in the class-AB operation the Vitus loses a little of its charm: it sounds a little more technical and glassier, not quite so finely balanced. Not bad, either, but definitely not the standard of that reached with a high spacing current. Well, this equipment is not really making its debut, but actually this is the case for the German market. And I am convinced that a range of music-lovers will let reason prevail and put the beauty of this amplifier into their living room. This has our blessing. No question.

Holger Barske



Vitus Audio SS-010

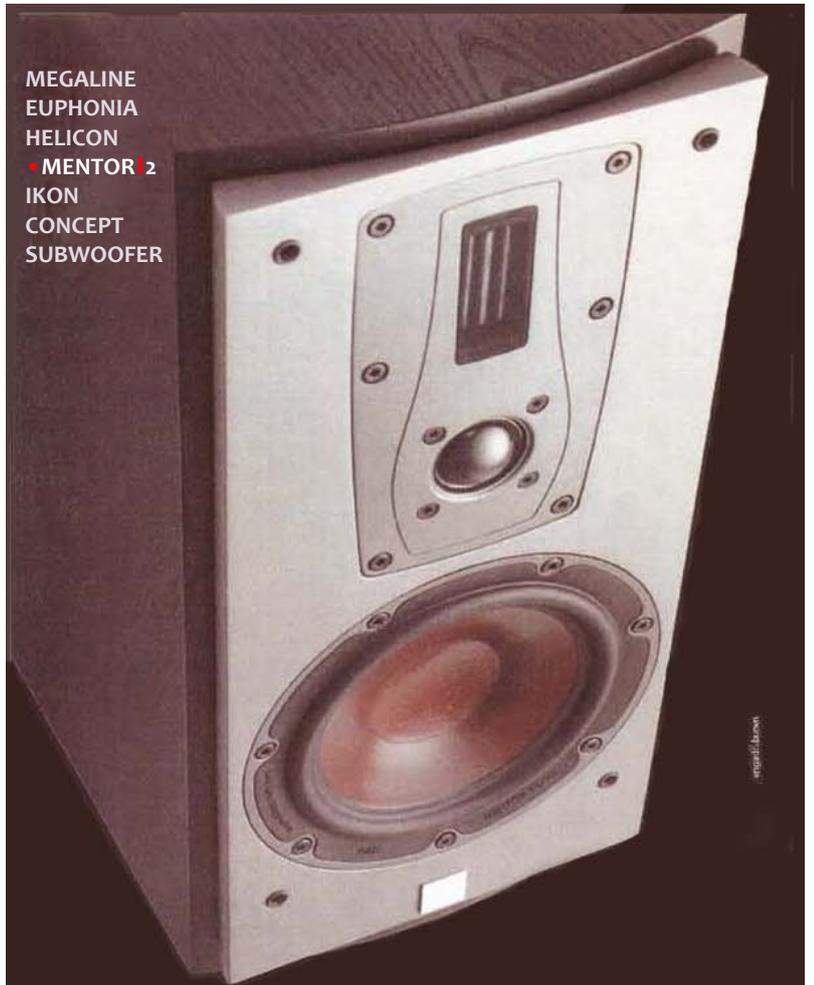
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