

Heading for New Shores

What can be done if, for decades, a brand has put only absolute top-level products on the market where in particular professional testers can find no true flaws any more? Which, neither in terms of sound nor workmanship, show any noteworthy or objective weaknesses. Well marketed, repaired under fair conditions in case of need and, in the event of parting, resold at favorable rates. Be prepared for a surprise.

There are plenty of other fish in the sea, as common parlance knows. Translated into the world of high-end, the saying could go like this: sure, other manufacturers also make bloody good sounding components. A lot of names spring to my mind when I merely think of companies that have specialized in electronics. But for various reasons, they would, after all, not become my love with a capital L. One simply has the hots for a certain mother's daughter. In my very personal case, the love for Accuphase has accompanied me during a long life of high fidelity.

The fact that I was »cheating« from time to time, which sometimes was indeed fun for me, shall – to stay within the picture – not be withheld. Nor the fact that, on some occasions, I fell flat on my face. Forgotten and forgiven, too bad for the beautiful money. Don't get me wrong: I'm not talking about tests of some sample devices stranded somewhere in our editorial departments, but of hard-earned investments – no monopoly, but real dough.

Each involvement with a topical component from Accuphase turns into a flashback. The champagne devices give me a sense of deep confidence. Confidence never develops overnight, it takes a really long time until it sets in and perhaps, if everything goes well, grows into an unshakeable basic trust. With Accuphase this does not only

apply to the devices, it also includes their German trustees, the Ishizuka family, Winfried Andres and Norbert Fegers as well as the responsible folks in Japan themselves who make every effort to never let you down.

Nothing but good experiences or never let *me* down. Because with a definite and explicit recommendation for a product I'm also taking a chance. My own credibility is on trial when I recommend people, as in this particular case, to lay more than 8,000 euros on the counter to buy the new E-480 integrated amplifier. I simply believe that nobody will ever regret such a costly decision. Not even after years if, for whatever reasons, one would like to sell off the device – because prices for Accuphase old- and young timers are stable and high.

Clear opinion Therefore it's really easy for me to take sides with Accuphase. Yes, I would like our readers to get a plausibly conveyed notion of my trust and then benefit from it. For instance, either by considering the purchase of a new component, by envisaging a second-hand device or simply by sticking with pride to the already acquired Accuphase. So far, so good – yet also very predictable. When browsing through various articles about Accuphase, written by myself and colleagues, I must admit that the gathered journalistic fraternity essentially keeps sending the same message. The words differ depending on the author – the statements hardly don't. Yet this is not the problem of Accuphase and even less of the German distributor, we are to be blamed for this. For obviously we're running out of new ideas. Or in a positive sense: because we are surrounded by so much electronic junk, it makes us rejoice when an extremely reliable and durable Accuphase component gives its very best in the editorial listening studios. At the same time, I'm also aware of critical voices among our readership. In real life, outside the display windows, showrooms, brochures and, of course, magazines, components sometimes keep the performance promise which had been propagandized aloud. In other words: they deliver much more, still know how to convince, perform better in the chain than one ever dared dream of. In what configurations did and do devices their best, in which do they not thrive – and what could be the underlying causes for this?

Readers' votes requested these are questions that lie in the focus of our coverage and you, very personally, my dear reader, may contribute in answering them. There are reasons for splendid combinations just as for less formidable ones. Hence, we also use high-end measuring technology for components that we subject to close scrutiny, including a reader forum. While doing so, we are less interested to see if, in the case

of Accuphase, the notoriously rather modest power specs in the catalogs can be surpassed under lab conditions (okay, we do want to know it), but in how far other parameters can boost or limit the performance.

Positive impressions as an obligatory program I have been listening to the E-480 in different constellations, and in my view it's probably the best I've ever come across in this price and performance category. When compared to a reference system of the Cello Audio Suite preamp and the Frans de Wit Century power amp (test 1/2019, page 36, ca. 50,000 €) on the tonally well-balanced Canton Vento Reference 1 DC high-power loudspeaker, one could even note some pros for the integrated amp: the Accuphase seemed to have more delicate midrange nuances than the mega combi. Which hardly ought to be chalked up to the mighty Frans de Wit, it's rather likely due to the Audio Suite: in issue 1/2019 the American high-rider had met its proverbial match in the shape of the Accuphase C-2450 preamp the genes of which dominate this fantastic E-480.

Nonetheless, in this chain it wouldn't be my first choice. Since both the listening room and the loudspeakers can handle a massive output power without caving in, baffling angry neighbors or startling them up from their sleep, I declare myself in favor of separate components here. A matter of application, not of quality! The Terzian 2-way speaker from Intonation, likewise presented in this issue and the precursor of which I have owned for about 28 years is, in the total of audiophile properties, superior to the Vento Reference with its phone booth dimensions. But »loud« and objectively »deep« are alien concepts for the Terzian. What a stage, what an emotional bliss when the Accuphase was driving this gem. Those who do not only want to know which instrument is playing in the orchestra, but also from which manufacturer it comes and who is probably playing it, can embark on discovery tours with a combination like this. Now, what do you think?

Joachim Pfeiffer