

Accuphase A-47

Very gently

A-46 becomes A-47. I was really a little saddened because Accuphase replaced one of the finest power amp artworks, which I've ever had the pleasure to host, by a new model

There is definitely no reason why such a breathtakingly perfect machine like the medium-sized class A Accuphase should be replaced by anything. Perfection cannot be augmented, what else could possibly follow next?

At first glance – absolutely nothing. The A-46 and A-47 are as alike as two peas in a pod. They have identical dimensions, the same weight but for 200 grams, the same power specs. Searching for technical distinctions between the two models turns out to be a toughie. With a time lag of two years, the metrological shootout between both devices will not yield a convincing success either, since both devices operate so close to the limits of our signal-to-noise and distortion measuring equipment that one can by no means conclude factual differences from the results. Yet the manufacturer does propagate them: the new one is said to have an even higher damping factor for connected loads and an even better S/N ratio. Sorry, but this we can't seriously verify: at -113.5 decibels (A) even the A-46 was playing in a range where already switching on the room lights causes a measurement deviation of several decibels.

At this point I would stop, surmising with a shrug that nothing else has happened except for an altered type reference and feel happy that the A-46 experience is now available for an attractive investment. I would – if it weren't for the fact which can hardly be denied that the two power amplifiers do not sound alike. Moreover, we're talking about Accuphase: If there is one manufacturer on this big, wide earth whose seriousness even with regard to their model policy I am most deeply convinced of, then it's this company based in Yokohama.

One interesting detail in this context: among the roughly 80 staff members of the Accuphase Laboratory Inc. are 30 engineers. In other words, people who know what they're doing. With many competitors you will be lucky to find even one who is at home in that technical stuff. But very many marketing professionals and software specialists. Meanwhile several things have also come to light which might be able to explain the differences: a modified layout of the input stage is responsible for the further improved S/N ratio, and near the edge of the brochure one can read in tiny

letters that the 230 volts version of the device features an auto shutoff which puts the machine out of operation after two hours. Sounds like another great idea from Brussels.

The A-47 is the second smallest model in the four-piece ensemble of class A power amps from this manufacturer. Designs with a high quiescent current are reputed to have an especially smooth and sophisticated sound, yet without the performance trees touching the sky, due to the required power dissipations. With the A-47 you won't have to worry about those kinds of things: It puts out way more than what the manufacturer states, it gets warm in a confidence inspiring manner and brings along all the sonic merits you're going to expect from such a device.

In general, what we have here is a mostly balanced power amplifier where a current feedback front end, which has been continuously refined over the years, takes care of the voltage gain and twelve powerful mosfets per channel generate the power. One of these impressive, neatly built amp modules sits on the left, the second one on the right heatsink.

The speaker terminals are new, but you can't tell from the outside: The signals coming from the power amp are now fed through solid bolts, which could already explain away the enhanced damping factor. There are, of course, perfectly functioning protective circuits which, if the worst comes to the worst, will save the connected loudspeaker from trouble by non-aging semi-conductor switches; an extremely heavy-duty power supply with slightly enlarged filtering capacity, and even when peeping into the rearmost corner of the device you won't spot a single detail that doesn't reveal a lot of consideration and an admirable sense of perfection.

Moreover, there are some nice features like e. g. a four-level switchable input sensitivity and, as is right and proper for such a power amplifier, two large (defeatable) VU meters – even with switchable peak hold function. Certainly, the A-47 may also be run in bridge mode, then you will just need two of them, but can enjoy almost quad power. What I've never seen anywhere else except for Accuphase: the phase of the balanced inputs is switchable. Two separately switchable speaker outputs? Sure thing. And needless to say, the unique binding posts will take up banana connectors as well as spades with a maximum of possible contact surface. No matter how you look at it: it can't get any better and more complete.

The listening session with the power amp was supposed to be something special which is why I took both devices home, along with the C-3800 overkill preamp. The chance to fire my large JBL monitors with two of these precious class A items was too compelling to let myself be deterred from it by the lugging donkeywork. Or by the electricity bill. And that was my plan: the Accuphase preamp should be wired to the fully balanced active tube-driven crossover from MalValve, which I've used for some time for splitting the frequency range at 290 Hertz to drive the speakers in bi-amping mode. From there the signals would be passed to the two power amps to feed the bass range with the two 15" woofers and the mid-high range (12" low-mid driver, 2"

compression horn driver for the highs and a slot driver for the ultra high frequencies). We're dealing with Accuphase, so both power amps provide exactly the same gain; thus I could swap both power amps to my heart's content without having to change the level settings. And I realized very quickly why there are so many big old JBLs around in Japan, driven by Accuphase electronics. No matter which power amp was feeding which path – the sound image had a suppleness and smoothness I hadn't known before. By the way, there was once an active frequency crossover from Accuphase called the F-25 with a custom-designed filter module for my speakers. Maybe there's still someone out there who ...

And which of these is now the better setup? I prefer to have the A-46 for the bass range. It appears to be sturdier, full-bodied and rounder by a hair, which under given conditions of room acoustics is the better choice. The A-47 goes about it down there in a slightly more nimble, more delicate way, yet also with a grain less substance. It is better suited for the mid-high range, teaching in particular the large compression driver the ultimate bit of creaminess which the A-46 has remained short on here. All this sounds more dramatic than it is, and it carries far less weight with a "normal" speaker, as was shown by the cross-check at the editorial rooms. In any event it is absolutely beyond doubt that both power amplifiers are among the best things one can buy for love or money.

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