



# HERFORD SYMPHONY

The full-range manufacturer T+A from Herford, Germany presented the streaming amplifier Symphonia at the High End Munich. STEREO already tested the modern device.

Text: Tom Frantzen

**A**ccording to T+A, the Symphonia is a streaming integrated amplifier that is as compact as it is stylish, in other words an integrated amplifier with network capabilities. By definition, this category is open to debate, because in addition to FM and DAB+ Ra-

dio on board, the sophisticated streaming part of the Symphonia also offers Internet radio – and this in turn could be interpreted to mean that it is actually a receiver. But of course there's no real need to argue about that.

It's great to have literally thousands of different international radio stations di-

rectly accessible as a source with this web option in addition to the home network and streaming services and, unlike with DAB+ or FM, not to be dependent on a few regional, location-dependent stations and reception conditions. Even good old FM can no longer even begin to keep up with this modern diversity, and also certainly not in terms of quality.

If you take a closer look at the streaming engine, that being the part of the device responsible for music streaming, you will find the powerful third-generation architecture (ASA G3) familiar from T+A's top components. It also comes with a genuinely good, tried-and-tested app for controlling all functions as intuitively as possible.



### Related by Choice

The amp, which could almost be seen as a slimline design, has inherited quite a bit from both the company's own 200 (mini) series and the legendary, very high-quality R series, its direct siblings.

Have we already mentioned how extremely attractive we think the retro element of the VU meters is? Especially as they are absolutely genuine and not digitally emulated, as well as being unusually shaped. It looks almost antique in a precious sense. Unique. Advanced, on the other hand, is the economical and ecological Class D amplifier technology, which of course ensures very impressive output power. T+A

specifies a continuous output of 125 watts per channel into 8 ohms and 250 watts into 4 ohms.

We were able to talk to Jörg Küpper, Head of Development, in Munich at some length about the sonic qualities of Class D technology. In a device as compact as the Symphonia, Class AB is hardly an option for high performance requirements. Nevertheless, Class D is now at such a high level in terms of sound quality, especially in the case of the modified Purifi self-clocking modules used, that this technology can also be used for very demanding amplifiers. But perhaps not (yet) for the R and not for the HV series, at least from T+A's point of view.

### High Amplifier Power

We verified the manufacturer's specifications in our STEREO laboratory, measuring 131 watts of output power into 8 ohms and 255 watts into 4 ohms, even exceeding them slightly. Whatever system the Symphonia plays in, it is very well and suitably "motorized" for all normal to higher demands in normal living environments, including the occasional birthday or New Year's Eve party.

Unfortunately, we can't provide impulse power measurements at this point, as the amplifier shuts off well before the defined 15 percent harmonic distortion is reached for this measurement. And we think that's perfectly fine.

Such distortions can certainly be taken as an opportunity to take a device out of operation for a short time as a precaution-



Tom Frantzen  
STEREO Editor

**»THE FABULOUS SYMPHONIA IS THE PROTOTYPE OF THE MODERN AMPLIFIER!«**

nary measure. However, we already reached or exceeded 250 watts as continuous power at 1 percent distortion, which means "very good" for impulse power in our grading system. "That's easily enough" or "Mission accomplished", you could say.

Permanent monitoring of the critical parameters ensures – evidently – absolute system reliability and stability despite all the power. A transmission bandwidth of around 60 kilohertz is achieved, which is pretty good for Class D with its necessary switching frequency. The damping factor, i.e. the ratio of the amplifier's output resistance to the speaker impedance, which influences the control of the transducer, is specified by T+A at a very high 800. However, as STEREO measures this value in a practical configuration using a short connection cable, we still arrive at excellent values of between 50 and 60. This is just to explain the deviation from the data sheet.

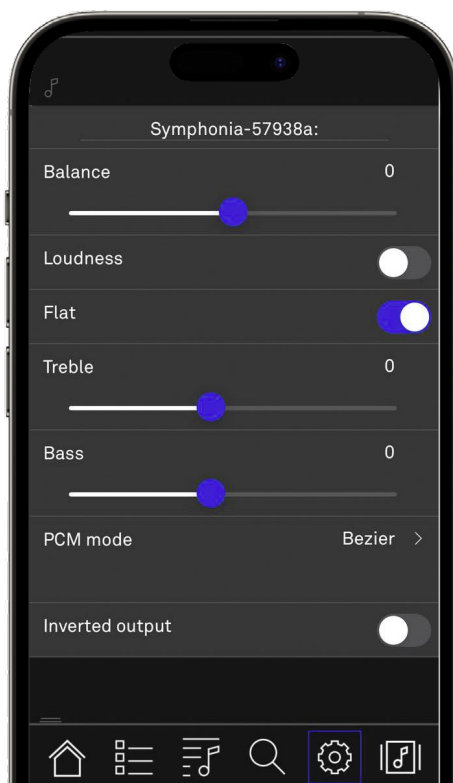
## TEST INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER WITH STREAMING

### Great Connectivity

And that is by no means the end of the feature list and explanation. The integrated phono module for connecting a turntable offers a MM or MC high output cartridge a decidedly high-quality home and is very well realized. There are also two analog high-level connections and two inputs for digital sources, two USB inputs for flash drives and hard drives, as well as preamp and subwoofer outputs for simple and convenient integration into existing, even more complex systems.

An HDMI connection, which is by no means a standard input, but nevertheless makes sense, ensures that the Symphonia can also become the particularly powerful center of an entertainment system including a modern TV in the living room. Instead of a single DAC, T+A has equipped the Symphonia with complete, equally competent processing lines for both PCM high frequencies up to 32 bit/384 kilohertz and true bit DSD streams (DSD256 native), as is also the case with the siblings in the higher device series from the manufacturer. If several converters share this task, the precision of the computing operations is more accurate and possible errors such as noise or jitter are also reduced. The PCM double differential DAC with switchable filter characteristics is a prime example of precision technology that has been further improved over the years and DSD is processed without conversion. Commendable: The mains phase is marked.

A general sound control including balance control is on board, because very few rooms and set-up locations are so perfect



The proprietary app developed by T+A even enables the switching of the absolute phase.

that you don't need to make any sound adjustments. There is even a loudness function for slightly richer sounds at low levels.

The device comes with an attractive, high-quality remote control, even if you will certainly use a smartphone or tablet with an app, especially for streaming.

### Made in Germany

Streaming music with the third-generation T+A network technology is a delight. Because it works well – and sounds good. T+A even develops the app in-house now. They also continue to refine it permanently, which besides offering a certain level of future-proofing, also seems to promise the ability to react quickly to emerging developments – like recently with Qobuz Connect.

The “Navigator G3” app from T+A is indeed well thought out, you can feel that the controls have developed almost organically from everyday handling. The app also has a tone control with optional presets. There are also no less than eight subtly different sounding digital filters that can be set and even the option to – something that every amp should have – reverse the absolute phase.

Naturally, all of this means a considerable amount of work, and the devices from the town of Herford are created by an unusually large team of developers by comparison. They are also manufactured here in Germany, largely by hand, using the best ingredients and with the help of regional, highly specialized suppliers. The price of this latest creation from T+A thus amounts to an impressive 8,490 euros.

### Hard Sound Duel

In this region, the German amp – admittedly featuring much more extensive equipment – meets the similarly expensive Musical Fidelity Nu-Vista 600.2. In contrast, that amp is a brutally designed and



**Preamplifier outputs:**  
The Symphonia has pre-outputs for connecting active speakers or amplifiers. Subwoofers can also be used.

**Digital In:**  
Digital sources can be connected via coaxial or Toslink (optical). Furthermore, there is a frontal USB socket and two USB sockets at the rear.

**E2-Link:**  
The E2-Link data bus is a proprietary, remote-controllable expansion interface from T+A.

**Power Input:**  
Unfortunately the exception – T+A marks the AC phase (L) for proper, often better-sounding plug positioning.



The T+A Symphonia integrated amplifier stands out as timelessly modern with its round VU meters, rotary controls and buttons and is available in both silver and black at the same price.

tube-equipped colossus, bred purely for sound, and weighing almost 30 kilograms more than the T+A.

In terms of power, the T+A can undoubtedly keep up quite well. And it also sounds decidedly good, fresh and crisp. The emotionality of this amplifier has nothing in common with the early Class D concepts, which always came across as a little pale. In any case, the two top speakers used, DALI Rubikore 8 and PMC Prohecy 7, were excellently controlled by the smart T+A amplifier, who also made them sound great. It thus delivered an exciting exchange of blows to the British sound artist, purist and around six times heavier.

The T+A reproduces the events on stage in a very slightly more subdued way; large, but somewhat more compact than the opulent British amp. The Symphonia strikes more gently with impulses, sounds more sober, drier, possibly a little more neutral, but not quite as juicy, charming and colorful. The German doesn't unleash quite as much power when it comes to emphasis either, rounding off the edges a little, but maintaining an excellent overview of the musical context.

It however sounds exceptionally pleasant and suitable for long-term listening, if not to say "fatigue-free". The enjoyment in the listening test is always reflec-

ted in the height of the stacks of records and/or CDs in the listening room. This is also the case here. The Irish singer Cara Dillon is superbly focused between the DALI loudspeakers, bringing out her characteristic, angelic voice to perfection.

The timing of Dave Brubeck's "Take Five", which should never be missing as a benchmark in a listening test, is also extremely good, and the grandiose number, which is now around 66 years old, is performed in an absolutely captivating manner.

### Universality versus Specialization

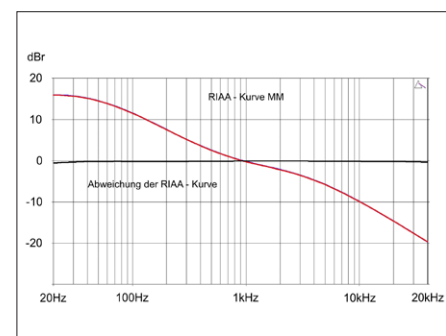
In the end, as expected, the T+A indeed lost the sound duel on points, albeit more narrowly than expected. In view of the "David versus Goliath" starting situation and its already mentioned, incomparably better equipment with phono, DAC and streamer, it however is without a doubt a winner of hearts, which is likely to find its way into more German living rooms than the amp from the island. You have to keep reminding yourself that with this T+A you not only get a pure integrated amplifier, but also several additional devices in one housing. A great universalist! ■

## MEASUREMENTS IN DETAIL

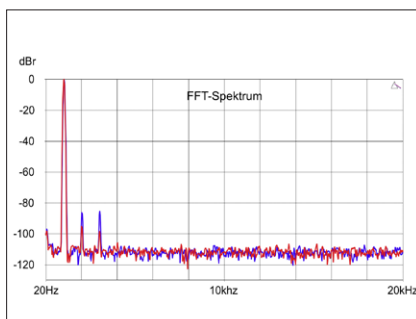
The T+A Symphonia in our STEREO lab test.

The new T+A Symphonia impresses with its high output power and does not show any other weaknesses in the laboratory. The FFT spectrum reflects the very low distortion and noise, which at 84 decibels at 5 watts is undoubtedly in the green zone, but is also not exceptionally great. Overall, it can be described as good. The upper cut-off frequency of 58 kilohertz is also perfectly acceptable, especially good for Class D, but rather "satisfactory" overall and is determined by the

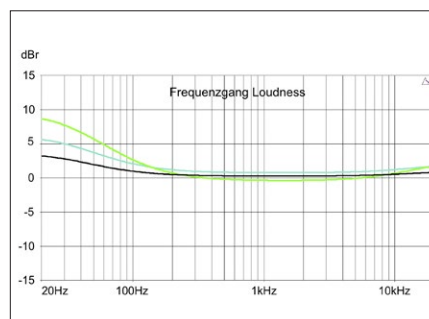
bandwidth of 60 kilohertz offered by the Purifi power amplifiers. The integrated preamplifier section could undoubtedly go higher. The RIAA precision (phono MM) is excellent. We also appreciate the on-board tone control (balance, bass, treble) and the useful loudness function, which allows the owner to adjust the sound of the system according to their own preferences and individual room conditions.



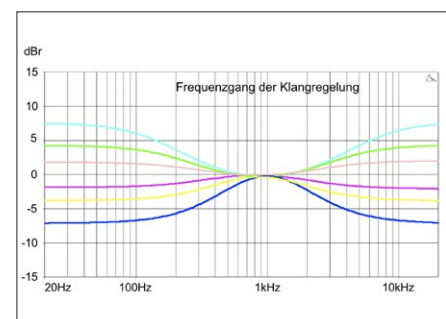
The phono equalization, which is important for vinyl record playback, is perfectly accurate.



The FFT spectrum is good and shows only a low level of interference (distortion/noise).



The loudness function also contributes to a pleasant fullness of sound at low levels.



The sound regulation is practical and allows for sensible adjustments.

# TEST INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER WITH STREAMING

## TEST DEVICES

**Turntable:** Micro Seiki MR-122/Grado  
**CD Player:** T+A MP 2000R  
**Streamer/DAC:** WiiM Ultra  
**Integrated Amplifier:** Musical Fidelity Nu-Vista 600.2  
**Preamplifier:** Audiolab 9000Q  
**Power Amplifier:** Audiolab 9000P  
**Speakers:** DALI Rubikore 8, PMC Prophecy 7  
**Cables:** Audioquest, In-Akustik, Supra



For detailed information on test devices, scan the QR code.



Even when an app is available, T+A includes a traditional - well thought-out and haptically good - remote control with their devices. Apparently, quality-conscious costumers appreciate this.

## T+A SYMPHONIA

Product Type / Price Range		Integrated Amplifier with Streaming / 5,000 to 10,000
Website		www.ta-hifi.com
Price in Euros		8,490
Dimensions (W x H x D) in cm / Weight in kg		38 x 10 x 34 / 6.2
German Distributor / Phone		T+A Elektroakustik GmbH & Co. KG / +49 5221 76760
SOUND		45 % good 1.7
Sound Quality		lively, precise, controlled, pleasant
MEASUREMENTS		15 % very good 1.4
Output Power per Channel (4 Ohms, 1 % THD, in Watts)		very good (255)
Impulse Power at 4 Ohms (1 kHz; in Watts)		very good (255)
Intermodulation at 5 Watts (in Percent)		very good (0.0022)
Damping Factor at 4 Ohms		very good (53 / 56 / 48)
Channel Separation (in Decibels)		very good (86)
Channel Balance Volume Control (in Decibels)		very good (0.06)
Upper Cutoff Frequency (in kHz)		satisfactory (58)
Distortion Factor at 5 Watts (in Percent)		very good (0.004)
Signal-to-Noise Ratio at 5 Watts (in Decibels)		satisfactory (84)
FFT Spectrum		very good
Power Consumption Idling (in Watts)		very good (28)
EQUIPMENT		20 % good 1.6
Haptics & Workmanship		very good
Number of Analog Inputs (RCA / XLR)		very good (2)
Special Interfaces / USB Storage		Phono, USB, HDMI, Headphone out, DAC / yes
Sound Control or Room Calibration		yes
Pre Out / Range of Functions Expandable		yes / no
Color Variants / Versions		good (2)
Streaming Standards		Amazon, Deezer, Qobuz, Spotify, Tidal
Music Formats		very good (practically all)
Hard Mains Switch		yes
HANDLING & OPERATION		20 % good 1.6
Quality of Remote / Manual / App		very good / very good / good
Operation on the Device / Display		very good
Warranty in Years		good (3)
TEST RESULT		good 1.6



The Symphonia is well filled, thanks to streamer/DAC technology and Purifi power amplifiers.