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“EXTRAORDINARY DETAIL ...

PALPABLE IN-ROOM QUALITY ...

CLEAN, SOLID, DYNAMIC POWER.”

Reviewed by Gary Altunian

While home theater receivers can be used for two-channel sound, they generally do not have the features found in stereo receivers and amps that enhance the stereo listening experience. With a few exceptions, features such as analog-only circuitry, a high-quality phono stage and balanced-line connections that contribute to better music reproduction and are typically found only in upscale stereo components. So it's refreshing that Anthem includes the features that audiophiles, music lovers and stereo enthusiasts look for when choosing a two-channel receiver or amplifier.

Anthem components are designed and manufactured by Sonic Frontiers International in Canada. The company offers many stereo

and multichannel AV components that I consider to be among the finest. For the past year I have been using Anthem's flagship multichannel control amplifier/tuner, the Statement D2 in my home theater system. The D2 allows precision control and setup of a home theater system and delivers superb audio decoding performance and video upscaling circuitry. The D2 is one of the best control amplifiers I've heard.

ANTHEM INTEGRATED 225 FEATURES

The Anthem Integrated 225 is an analog stereo integrated amplifier with 225 watts per channel, seven analog inputs, including a pair of balanced-line analog inputs, moving magnet phono input, CD and four AUX inputs with one front panel stereo input for a portable music player. Its features are

geared for stereo listening and recording or custom installation applications, such as a zone amp for multiroom audio applications.

Construction quality of the 225 is excellent. The front panel is fabricated from 1/2" thick aluminum and even the machine screws that fasten the steel cover to the chassis are flush with the surface. I removed the cover to have a look at the inside of the amp and all circuitry is neatly organized and logically laid out.

The Integrated 225 amplifier is a Class A-B design with six bipolar devices per channel. Its generous power output of 225 watts per channel uses a toroidal transformer backed by dual 30,000 micro-farad filter capacitors, which provides plenty of dynamic headroom

and makes it well suited for a wide variety of loudspeakers, even those with a sensitivity spec well below 90 dB.

The Anthem amp uses analog circuitry throughout, even employing a motorized analog volume control that can be controlled manually, by remote control or via the RS-232 control interface for use with a system controller. A lighted indicator on the volume control would be helpful since there is no on-screen or front panel display to indicate volume level.

“Its performance qualities are the closest I’ve heard to separate components, except they’re combined handily in one chassis and at a much lower price.”

The Anthem Integrated 225 comes with a universal learning remote control that can be programmed to operate other system components or can learn commands from other remote controls. The Anthem remote control is fully backlit enabling easy use in low light. Macro commands can be programmed into the Anthem remote control to execute multiple functions, such as amp power, cable box, TV power and so on. A total of 32 commands can be programmed into the macro function.

Custom installation features include a +12-volt trigger in-out connection so it can activate other components or be activated by a control system. Its detachable IEC power cord makes installation easier.

“... meticulous and precise ... each musical element was distinct ... voice was easy to visualize as it floated between the speakers ... without the sonic smear so common in busy recordings with multiple musical instruments.”

The moving magnet phono stage uses active and passive equalization that, according to Anthem strictly follows RIAA standards and

is designed to provide accurate, uncolored reproduction of vinyl recordings. High-output moving coil cartridges can also be used with the Integrated 225.

There are a few features I wish the Anthem amp had, including a separate headphone level control, a pre-main coupler and bass management circuitry for use with a subwoofer.

AUDIO PERFORMANCE

I tested the Anthem 225 in my reference two-channel system consisting of a pair of Paradigm Reference Studio 100 speakers and a Yamaha CDX-1060 CD player. The 225 seemed right at home with my Paradigm speakers and produced extraordinary detail, vocal presence and warm bass response.

Most notable was Diana Krall’s breathy, sultry voice in “How Insensitive” in her *From This Moment On* disc. Every breath had a palpable in-room quality that makes this great recording sound live. Her voice was easy to visualize as it floated between the speakers. Each musical element was distinct and the soundstage sounded almost three-dimensional as if I were listening to a multichannel recording. Bass was full and warm from the moment the track began with the bass drum.

“... my carefully preserved LPs sounded as good as ever ... excellent dynamic headroom ... you could spend less for an integrated amp, but not an amp with 225 watts per channel of clean, solid, dynamic power.”

Percussion instruments sounded distinct and tight from Diana Krall’s piano to the dual guitars in Acoustic Alchemy’s “Mr. Chow”. Cymbals were crisp, clean and detailed without the sonic smear so common in busy recordings with multiple musical instruments.

A good recording brings out the best in a system and Ana Caram’s *Anos Dourados* and Sara K’s *Miles Away* from Chesky Records was no exception. Every minute instrumental and vocal detail sounded meticulous and precise.

Ah, the warm sound of a vinyl recording. My carefully preserved LPs sounded as good

as ever on the Integrated 225. Joan Baez’ *Diamonds and Rust* and *Quadrophenia* by The Who were just a few of my favorites I listened to on the Anthem amp.

CONCLUSION

The Anthem Integrated 225 lives up to my expectations of a component in the Anthem electronics family. Its performance qualities are the closest I’ve heard to separate components, except they’re combined handily in one chassis and at a much lower price. Its phono section will please vinyl enthusiasts and it has more than adequate power output for virtually any speakers with excellent dynamic headroom. You could spend less for an integrated amp, but not an amp with 225 watts per channel of clean, solid, dynamic power.

