Pathos amp will fire your passions

This is an amplifier that makes a deep impression before you've even switched it on – it's heavy, as if hewn from solid chunks of wood and metal – and when you hear it in action, it leaves you hungry for more.

HANDS UP WHO continually listens to the same few CDs, leaving the majority of a large music collection gathering dust? In other words, if you're a U2 fan, you often listen to Achtung Baby, but avoid Zapp. If it's Michael Jackson, it's Thriller, but never Invincible.

If we could show you a way to reignite your enthusiasm for your forgotten collection, would you be interested? Well, the Pathos Inpol 2 is that solution. This stereo amplifier will give your music library the kiss of life, lending recordings a quality that'll have grinning from ear to ear. You'll again enjoy music with the enthusiasm of that 15-year-old who thought he was the first person in the world to discover – choose your generation – the Beatles, Led Zeppelin, Sex Pistols, The Smiths, Eminem or Arctic Monkeys... even Michael Jackson.

More of your music comes alive
The key here is realism: nothing beats live music, and the Pathos delivers a sincere sense of the music being 'alive'. Its midrange in particular is unreveredly gorgeous, but don't think for a second that this vocal excellence is due to a typically 'glowy' valve amplifier sound, or achieved at the expense of detail, pace or excitement.

Contrary to what you might think from a quick glance this isn't an all-valve amp. It's actually a hybrid device, which mixes solid state and valve technology to stunning effect. Consequently, spin Eminem's Without Me, and you get not only awesome vocals, but also crackernapping percussion, masses of detail, and the necessary drive to propel this hip-hop tune along as smoothly and speedily as a top-of-the-range Ferrari.

If we were being hypercritical, we could mention that the lowest frequencies lack the punch and pace available from the bass kings at this price. But then everything else is so good that we defy you to be bothered. You might also find the Pathos struggles to drive massively demanding speaker loads, but fortunately such speakers are few and far between.

Play some dynamic classical music – try Jupiter from Holst's Planets – and the Pathos is in its element. Orchestral instruments are delivered with stunning refinement, and the amplifier avoids getting its feet stuck in its own midrange. It dextrously dives down into the lower frequencies, and nimblly reaches up to the highest treble.

Devilish dynamics all day
It also stops and starts notes with skill, keeping excitement levels high. This is addictive hi-fi and, once you're hit play, we dare you to stop a track before the end. The Inpol 2 is what you could call an 'album amp' – once a disc is in, you'll want to listen to it from start to finish, with no need to touch the absolutely lovely remote control (we kind of expect that with five grand hi-fi).

So, are we getting carried away? Yes we are, but unashamedly so and for very good reason: after all, we haven't even discussed the styling yet. But then take a look at the picture (right) and you'll see there's no further need for words...

**Tech Specs**
- **Type**: Integrated dual-mono amplifier with valve preamp and Class A power amp
- **Maximum Power Output**: 50 watts per channel
- **Analogue Inputs**: 5 x phone, balanced XLR
- **Tape Loop**: Yes
- **Speaker Outputs**: Two pairs
- **Subwoofer Output**: 1
- **Remote Control**: Yes
- **Finish**: Metallic silver & wood
- **Weight**: 38kg
iPod headphones are a Shure-fire hit

Discover a hitherto unheard level of detail when you pair your Apple with Shure's E4C

**HEADPHONES**

**SHURE E4C**

**FOR**

- Incredibly detailed, natural sound;
- Dynamic delivery with great bass;
- Range of earpiece sizes; black and white versions available

**AGAINST**

- Incredibly snug fit won’t suit everyone;
- They’re a waste of money if you listen to low bit-rate MP3 files

**VERDICT**

The best in-ear headphones we’ve heard: If you can live with the intrusive design, you’ll enjoy remarkable sound.

**REGULAR READERS WILL**

know we love the Apple iPod, but loathe its freebie headphones. You can get so much more from the player, and normally we’d advocate an instant headphone upgrade in the shape of Sennheiser’s MX500 in-ear (£20) or PX100 folding over-ear (£35) designs. So is it worth paying almost as much as, if not more than your did for your player for Shure’s E4Cs?

**Delivering a live-like performance**

The 119 Shures sport a 3.5mm headphone jack as standard (with a 6.3mm adapter plug supplied), complete with gold-plated connections. There’s also a neat carry case, plus a range of earpieces in different sizes and styles.

After a few days’ running-in (yes, really), the E4Cs deliver breathtaking detail. Previously indistinct backing vocalists, percussionists and entire orchestras emerge from the murk to join the centre-stage performers in an incredibly lively musical experience. The voice-cracking emotion on Frank Sinatra’s *One For My Baby* reaches heartrending levels via the Shures – something we’re more used to on high-end hi-fi.

However, it’s not just great recordings that benefit — play Black Eyed Peas’ chaotic and thumping *Pump It*, and the dynamic delivery and astonishingly taut bass make spontaneous public dancing a very real danger.

Any flaws? Well, unlike many in-ear headphones, which sit lightly in your ears, the

“The voice-cracking emotion on Sinatra’s *One For My Baby* reaches heartrending levels”

E4Cs can appear to be burrowing into your brain. And it’s only with this ultra-snug fit that you’ll hear them at their best, and benefit from their noise-isolation properties (did we mention these are more effective than noise-cancelling phones?)

However, their exceptional performance makes them worth persevering with the ear-piece variations to find your perfect fit. If you’re after more from your music on the move, get ripping your tunes in Apple Lossless, then plug in a pair of Shure E4Cs.

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