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JASON VICTOR SERINUS

Vitus Audio RI-101 Mk.II

INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER

Six years after Hans-Ole Vitus, the founder of Danish company Vitus Audio, visited the United States to premier his first three products at CES 2004, Michael Fremer went gaga over the company's top-line MP-P201 Masterpiece Series phono pre-amplifier.¹ Thirteen years later, at AXPONA 2023,² it was my turn to be blown away, this time by the sound of a \$385,000 Vitus Audio top-of-the-line Masterpiece series front-end and amplifiers that sang through price-commensurate Estelon Extreme Mk II loudspeakers.

In between—and not for want of trying—Vitus's presence in these pages has been limited to show reports. It's time to change that.

Enter the "entry-level" (\$20,000) Vitus RI-101 Mk.II, an attractive integrated amplifier that can be outfitted with an optional DAC/streamer board for an extra \$5000. The Vitus RI-101 Mk.II is part of the company's Reference series; paradoxical though it may seem, above it sit the Signature and Masterpiece series.

A fully balanced class-AB integrated capable of putting out an impressive 300Wpc into 8 ohms and 600Wpc into 4 ohms, the



RI-101 Mk.II boasts an aluminum chassis, fully discrete output stage, and a relay-based fixed-resistor stepped volume control that allows for 1dB volume changes between -80dB and +8dB. Through

1 See stereophile.com/phonopreamps/vitus_audio_mp-p201_masterpiece_series_phono_pre-amplifier/index.html.

2 See stereophile.com/content/estelon-and-vitus-audio-lead-way-million-dollar-system.

SPECIFICATIONS

Description Balanced, class-AB solid state integrated stereo amplifier with optional DAC/streamer module. Analog inputs: Three balanced (XLR), two unbalanced (RCA), all 4V RMS tolerable. Outputs: One pair balanced speaker terminals, one pair balanced XLR changeable between pre out & tape out. Rated output power: 300W RMS into 8 ohms, 600W RMS into 4 ohms (both 24.73dBW). Input impedance: 16k ohms. Output impedance:

0.075 ohms (loudspeaker), 33 ohms (Pre/Tape Out). Bandwidth: 800kHz. THD + N: 0.04% at 100W, 1kHz. S/N ratio: >100dB, 1kHz. Power consumption: Standby <1W, operation with no load: 90W or 120W with DAC/streamer.

Digital inputs (optional module) One S/PDIF (RCA, 192kHz max), one AES3 (192kHz max), one RJ45 Ethernet port for streaming Roon, Tidal Connect, Spotify Connect, UPnP, etc. DAC supports up to 32 bits and

sample rates up to 384kHz/MQA and DSD128 (converted to PCM).

Dimensions 17" (435mm) W × 13" (470 mm) D × 7 11/64" (182mm) H. Weight: 88.2lb (40kg).

Finish Jet black, pure white, warm silver, or custom colors for additional charge.

Serial number of unit reviewed US-D0017 (auditioned), US-D0005 (measured). Designed and built in Denmark.

Price \$20,000. Optional DAC/Streaming module: \$5000. Approximate number of US dealers: 10. Warranty: 2 years, additional 4 years upon registration by original owner.

Manufacturer AVA Group A/S. Hammershusvej 3L, DK7400 Herning, Denmark. Tel: +45 9626 8046. Email: sales@avagroup.nu. Web: vitusaudio.com. US contact: Aldo Filippelli. Tel: (888) 409-9290. Email: aldo@avagroup.nu.

its RJ45 Ethernet port, the optional DAC/streamer board supports streaming up to 32/384kHz PCM and DSD128 (via DoP, which is to say, converted to PCM). The unit's S/PDIF and AES3 ports support up to 24/192 PCM and do not transmit DSD.

The original Vitus RI-101 was released in 2017, replacing the RI-100. The Mk.II dates to 2020, with optimizations to the power supply, the optional streamer/DAC, and the preamplifier stage. The Mk.II received a new streaming module at the end of 2023. On the amplifier side, the upgrade included output-stage optimization to allow a bit more class-A current, an update to the power supply that allows for significantly more headroom, transformer optimization, and board-layout optimizations with shorter signal paths, thicker and wider supply tracks, and better grounding. The new DAC/streamer board update delivered Roon-ready functionality, upgrades to certain digital power supply lines, a new streaming module that supports higher bit and sample rates, and the top-line ESS Sabre ES9038PRO DAC chip. The Mk.II DAC/streamer supports, in addition to Roon, UPnP/DLNA (via MConnect and similar apps), Tidal Connect, Spotify connect, V-tuner, Qobuz, and more.³

All this represents another achievement by Hans-Ole Vitus, the engineer, audio enthusiast, and hobbyist who began playing snare drum in a marching band when he was 12 years old. The die was cast when he got his first all-Pioneer hi-fi system, even before he joined his first rock band at age 15.

At 18, Hans-Ole faced a potential apocalypse when he was seduced by the sound of Gryphon Audio Designs equipment that he could not afford. So he began to study engineering so that he could

roll his own. In 1995, at age 27, he began to build his own amplifiers while working as a sales manager for Texas Instruments. When fellow enthusiasts began to request his components, Vitus considered going commercial. His first products—big mono amplifiers and battery-driven phono and line stages that were soon discontinued due to EU restrictions on shipping large battery packs—debuted at the Stockholm audio show in 2003. The design aesthetic that visually distinguished the first Vitus components from their contemporaries continues to this day.

Because only the most basic information about the Vitus RI-101 Mk.II integrated amplifier is available online, I Zoomed with the company's current co-owner and CEO, Alexander (Alex) Vitus Mogensén, who is Hans-Ole's son;⁴ COO/co-owner Lukas Birk Eriksen; and Vitus's US representative, Aldo Filippelli. Our discussion was low on specifics because, in Lukas's words, "We do not explain the technology a whole lot. We generally reference the sound instead and let the sound and product speak for themselves."

Alex told me that while the Reference series uses a less-expensive chassis, with thinner plating than products in the higher series, that cost-cutting measure has been offset by the extra attention the company has devoted to internal shielding. Vitus's approach was to "cut/optimize costs where we could without greatly affecting the sound. There is a difference, but it is not that major. We still put a lot of focus on the power from the transformer,

3 Existing RI-101 owners can have units upgraded at authorized service centers.

4 Hans-Ole Vitus has stepped down from administrative operations to focus exclusively on development.

MEASUREMENTS

I used my Audio Precision SYS2722 system¹ to measure the Vitus RI-101 Mk.II, repeating some tests with the magazine's Audio Precision APx555. I connected the amplifier's Line 1 balanced inputs to the Audio Precision's balanced outputs and immediately discovered that one channel's output had been damaged during shipping. US distributor Aldo Filippelli therefore arranged for a second sample to be shipped to me from Manhattan retailer Park Avenue Audio. Jason's sample had the serial number US-D0017; that of the new sample was US-D0005.

Both channels of this sample matched

closely, so I proceeded with the measurements. I preconditioned the new RI-101 before the measurements by following the CEA's recommendation of running it at one-eighth that power into 8 ohms for 30 minutes. Following that period, the top panel was warm, at 100.7°F (38.2°C), and the internal heatsinks were hot, at 139.3°F (59.6°C).

The RI-101 preserved absolute polarity with both its balanced and unbalanced line inputs at both the speaker and preamplifier outputs. The volume control operated in accurate 1dB steps and with the volume control set to the maximum,

"+8.0dB," the voltage gain at 1kHz was 36dB, balanced, and 35.4dB, unbalanced, into 8 ohms from the loudspeaker outputs, 0.4dB from the preamplifier outputs. The line input impedance is specified as 16k ohms for both input types. I measured 30k ohms at 20Hz and 1kHz and 14k ohms at 20kHz for the single-ended inputs, 33k ohms across the audioband for the balanced inputs.

The balanced preamplifier output impedance was a usefully low 66 ohms from 20Hz to 20kHz. The loudspeaker output

1 See stereophile.com/content/measurements-maps-precision.

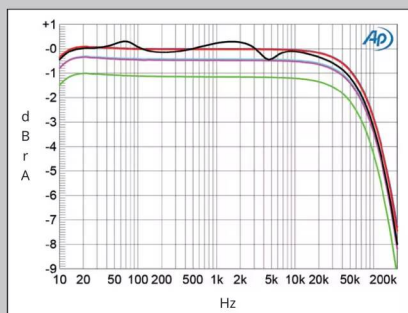


Fig.1 Vitus RI-101 Mk.II, balanced line input, frequency response at 2.83V into: simulated loudspeaker load (gray), 8 ohms (left channel blue, right red), 4 ohms (left cyan, right magenta), 2 ohms (green) (1dB/vertical div.).

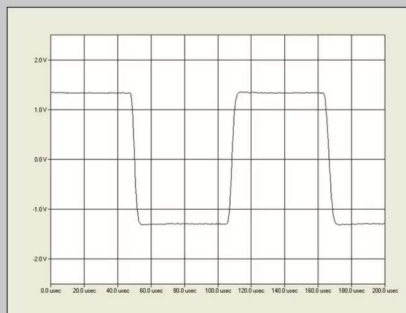


Fig.2 Vitus RI-101 Mk.II, line input, small-signal 10kHz squarewave into 8 ohms.

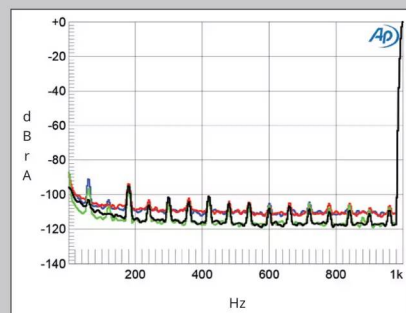
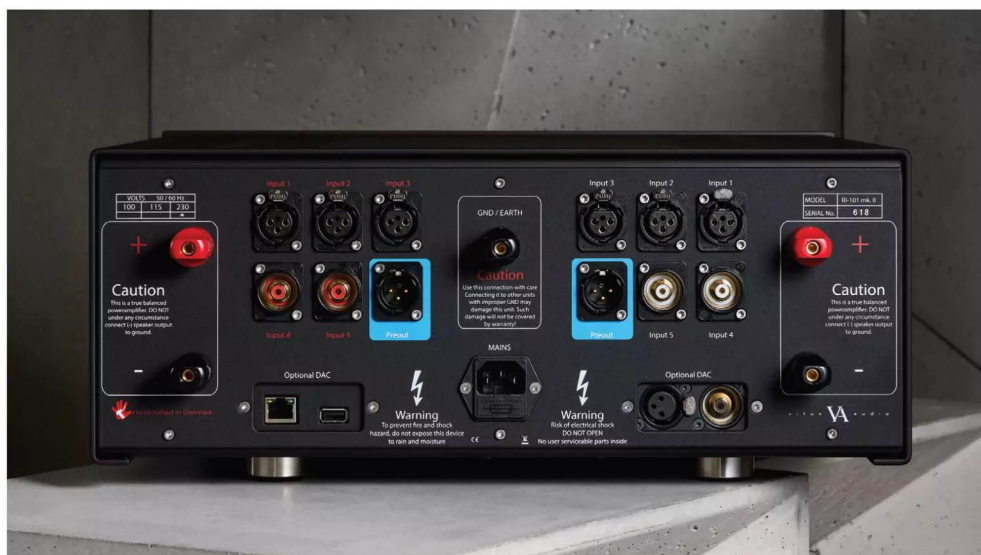


Fig.3 Vitus RI-101 Mk.II, line input, spectrum of 1kHz sinewave, DC-1kHz, at 1Wpc into 8 ohms with volume control set to "+8.0dB" (left channel blue, right red), and to "-12.0dB" (left channel green, right gray) (linear frequency scale).

where everything starts. It's like the engine in a car. If you lack power, it will affect sound tremendously."

The Vitus RI-101 Mk.II utilizes the same technology as the rest of the Reference series, optimized for an entry-level integrated's restraints of space and cost. According to Lukas, Reference-series technology is "mainly trickled down from the other series." Most resistors and capacitors are the same, save for some of the larger capacitors. Transformer choice is another story. While Vitus eschews the use of toroidal transformers, Reference-series transformer winds differ from those in its higher-level brethren. The Reference series uses "EI" transformers. The Signature and Masterpiece series, by contrast, use UI transformers which, Lukas said, "are more stable with high loads. ... They are even more optimized for delivering higher power without any drop in voltage. We've seen toroidal transformers drop voltage too much under heavy loads in comparison to our Danish-made transformers. Something can sound very impressive, but then you really crank up the volume and the sound quality



feels like it drops off."

When queried about design goals, Alex responded, "We always aim for emotions and feeling. We want to give people a genuine emotional experience rather than 'hi-fi.'" He referenced a time at CES, perhaps a decade ago, when a woman entered the room quietly as his father played some orchestral music. After the piece had concluded, she was in tears. Asked why she had been affected

measurements, continued

impedance, including 6' of spaced-pair speaker cable, was slightly lower than that of the original amplifier, at 0.47 ohms in the bass and midrange and 0.49 ohm at the top of the audioband. Consequently, the modulation of the RI-101's frequency response due to the Ohm's law interaction between this impedance and the impedance of our standard simulated loud-speaker² was $\pm 0.4\text{dB}$ (fig.1, gray trace). The amplifier's response into resistive loads was flat in the audioband, with its output into 8 ohms (blue and red traces) down by 3dB at 100kHz. This graph was taken

with the volume control set to "0.0dB"; the close channel matching was preserved at all volume control settings. The RI-101's reproduction of a 10kHz squarewave (fig.2) had short risetimes, with no overshoot or ringing.

Channel separation was superb, at $>100\text{dB}$ in both directions below 10kHz. The wideband, unweighted signal/noise ratio, taken with the unbalanced input shorted to ground and the volume control set to "0.0dB," was a good 69.4dB in both channels ref. 2.83V, which is equivalent to 1W into 8 ohms. This ratio improved to

81.3dB when the measurement bandwidth was restricted to the audioband, and to 84.2dB when A-weighted. The spectrum of the noise floor at 1W into 8 ohms with the volume control set to the maximum is shown as the blue and red traces in fig.3. The level of random noise dropped by 6dB with the volume control setting reduced by 20dB and the input signal increased by the same 20dB, but the levels of the supply-related spurs at 60Hz and its odd-order harmonics were identical, at -90dB ref.

² See stereophile.com/content/real-life-measurements-page-2.

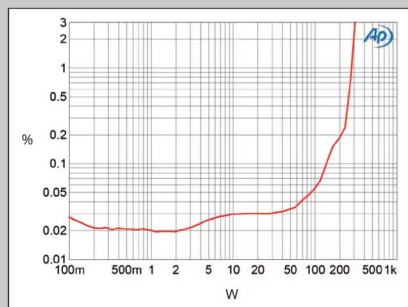


Fig.4 Vitus RI-101 Mk.II, distortion (%) vs 1kHz continuous output power into 8 ohms.

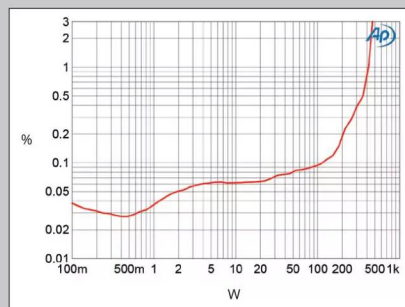


Fig.5 Vitus RI-101 Mk.II, distortion (%) vs 1kHz continuous output power into 4 ohms.

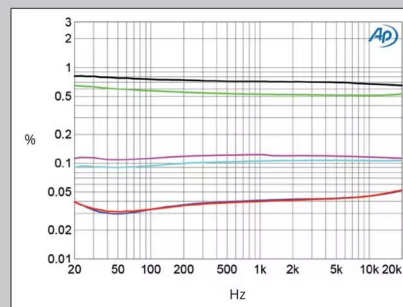


Fig.6 Vitus RI-101 Mk.II, THD+N (%) vs frequency at 20V into: 8 ohms (left channel blue, right red), 4 ohms (left channel cyan, right magenta), and 2 ohms (left channel green, right gray).

so strongly, she replied that it was the first time she'd heard the piece sound like what she experienced when she was present during the recording session.

"Those are the kind of the emotions that we want to capture and convey," Alex said. "That's our end goal, and it doesn't matter whether it's the Reference series or the Signature or the Masterpiece series. Emotion's one thing we don't compromise on. If we don't feel that we can make a product that sounds right by our standards, we're not going to put it to market."

"We want to convey the music's power in the way that solid state amplifiers can, but without harshness," Lukas said. "Sound is dependent on how you design the entire product, not just the output stage. If there's something wrong in the input stage, the whole product will not sound correct."

Vitus recently changed its printed circuit board manufacturer.



In getting to the musical essence of Britten's marvelous concerto, the Vitus RI-101 Mk.II did itself proud.

Slight changes in specs and thickness produced sonic improvements immediately recognized by customers and retail partners. Ditto for changes in parts and component placement. "Minor adjustments actually make a big difference," Alex said. "We're always learning and evolving."

Vitus included Stillpoints feet on some of its past units; then they learned that different customers have different preferences. "Multiple times we have used Stillpoints footers or something else,

measurements, continued

2.83V and below.

Stereophile specifies an amplifier's clipping power as when the THD+noise reaches 1%. With both channels driven and the volume control set to "0.0dB," the clipping power into 8 ohms was slightly lower than the specification, at 290W into 8 ohms (24.62dBW, fig.4). This is 0.11dB lower than the specified 300W into this load (24.73dBW). The RI-101 did reach its specified output power at 3% THD+N. The amplifier's maximum power into 4 ohms, specified as 600W, was 410W (23.12dBW, fig.5) at 1% THD+N and 470W (23.71dBW)

at 3% THD+N. The wall voltage had dropped from 118.4V with the amplifier idling to 116.4V at the clipping power into this load. Vitus doesn't specify the RI-101's maximum power into 2 ohms, but the amplifier clipped at 360W (19.54dBW) into this load, the wall voltage dropping to 115.4V.

Fig.6 shows how the THD+N percentage varied with frequency at 20V, which is equivalent to 50W into 8 ohms, 100W into 4 ohms, and 200W into 2 ohms. The THD+N was respectably low into 8 ohms (blue and red traces) but increased into the lower impedances, exceeding 0.5% into 2 ohms

(green and gray traces). However, there was no increase in the THD+N percentage at high frequencies, which suggests that the amplifier has a respectably wide open-loop bandwidth.

Vitus says that the amplifier's output stage transitions from class-A to class-AB at approximately 8W into 8 ohms. I wasn't surprised to find, therefore, that the THD+N waveform at 50W into 8 ohms had spikes present at the waveform's zero-crossing points (fig.7). These crossover spikes correlate with the presence of high-order harmonics in the output (fig.8),

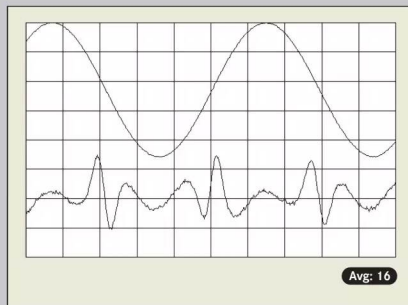


Fig.7 Vitus RI-101 Mk.II, 1kHz waveform at 50W into 8 ohms, 0.032% THD+N (top); distortion and noise waveform with fundamental notched out (bottom, not to scale).

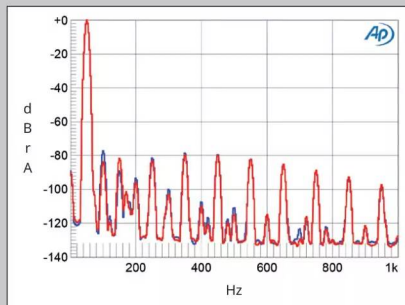


Fig.8 Vitus RI-101 Mk.II, spectrum of 50Hz sine wave, DC-1kHz, at 50W into 8 ohms (left channel blue, right red; linear frequency scale).

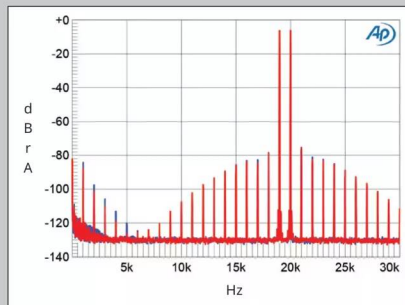


Fig.9 Vitus RI-101 Mk.II, HF intermodulation spectrum, DC-30kHz, 19+20kHz at 50W peak into 8 ohms (left channel blue, right red; linear frequency scale).

customers have taken them off and replaced them with others,” Lukas said. “Rather than having them pay an extra premium for something that they might remove, we let customers decide what they want to use.”

When I mentioned power conditioning, Aldo chimed in. “I’m a firm believer that the Vitus Audio power supplies do very adequate filtering internally,” he said. “When I’ve plugged the units—especially the preamp and the amplifiers—directly into dedicated lines, that has always sounded better than [it sounds] going into any level or make of power conditioner. Dedicated lines deliver much more low-frequency energy. Bass is also faster and more dynamic, and the soundstage is bigger, wider, and deeper. What’s most clearly audible is a sense of ease in the midrange and highs that I have not been able to find when I’ve plugged any pre-amp, amplifier, or integrated into any brand of power conditioner. When I do use a conditioner on amps, I hear grain in the mid to high ranges. They can work for some digital electronics, but we do not recommend using them with higher power units.”⁵

What you see and get

An interactive feature⁶ on the Vitus RI-101 Mk.II’s webpage displays standard and “unique” chassis-color options, which you can mix and match. You can also download the manual, v1.12 at this writing, in pdf form; owners receive it on a USB stick. Much of the manual is devoted to menu explanations (see below).

The RI-101 Mk.II’s simple and elegant front includes a relatively narrow, recessed central panel with a display that indicates input and volume. Framing it on each side are larger panels, available in contrasting colors. The left panel contains input, menu, and stand-

by buttons; the right includes two up/down volume buttons—there is no volume knob—and a third button for mute. The menu button allows you to custom name inputs, set the initial volume setting for different inputs, turn the small Vitus logo and off, adjust illumination, engage auto-standby, and more. In this sense, the RI-101 Mk.II is very *au courant*. Once you select a menu option, the up and down buttons adjust parameters. I made my life simple by sticking to the factory default settings.

The rear panel offers three XLR inputs, two RCA inputs, XLR pre/tape out, easy-to-grasp speaker terminals, “Gnd/Earth” connector (which I did not use), and 15A IEC. It’s relatively easy to replace a blown fuse or to use a custom fuse. Firmware is updatable via a USB port.

Setup and game plan

While my status as a good boy is always open to question—I’m sure I was one sometime in the distant past—I honor manufacturer’s wishes when I can. Hence, after friend Scott and I installed the fully-decked-out Vitus RI-101 Mk.II on the free top shelf of my Grand Prix Monza equipment rack, I plugged it directly into the wall, and so it stayed throughout the review.

A simple A-B-A test confirmed that replacing stock, nothing-special feet with Wilson Audio Pedestals delivered increased air and transparency and elevated the whole sonic presentation. Those supports may cost 10% of the price of the integrated itself, and my cabling costs many times more—but why not?

⁵ Aldo acknowledged that he had never tried a Stromtank S 4000, which is designed to handle high current power amplifiers.

⁶ See vitusaudio.com/products/ri-101-mk-ii.

measurements, continued

though these all lie at or below –80dB (0.01%). The high-order intermodulation products with an equal mix of 19 and 20kHz tones at the same peak power all lie at or below –80dB (fig.9), with the second-order difference product at 1kHz 4dB lower in level.

I had examined the performance of the original Vitus RI-101’s optional AES3 and S/PDIF digital inputs with data sourced from the SYS2722, repeating some tests with the Streamer Ethernet input. However, while the new sample’s AES3 and S/PDIF

inputs locked to datastreams with sample rates up to 192kHz, the levels at both the loudspeaker and preamplifier outputs changed unpredictably, with occasional random noise. It is possible, therefore, that this board was not functioning correctly, so I continued the testing with network data fed to the Streamer input from Roon.

The behavior of the new amplifier’s Ethernet input was very similar to that of the original sample. It preserved absolute polarity from all the outputs. With the volume control set to “0.0dB,” the RI-101’s

voltage into 8 ohms at the speaker outputs with a 1kHz tone at –20dBFS was 4.4V, which means that a tone at 0dBFS will be reproduced just 1dB below the clipping voltage into that load. The level with that tone was 230mV at the preamplifier output; I continued the digital input testing from that output with the volume control set to “0.0dB.”

Fig.10 shows the RI-101’s impulse response with 44.1kHz data. The filter is a minimum-phase type, with all the ringing following the single sample at 0dBFS. The

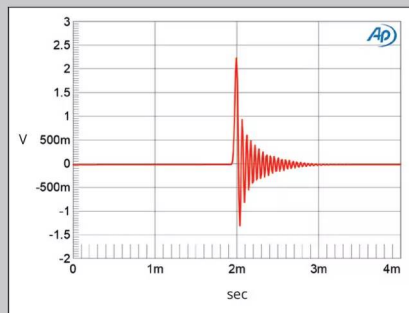


Fig.10 Vitus RI-101 Mk.II, network data, impulse response (one sample at 0dBFS, 44.1kHz sampling, 4ms time window).

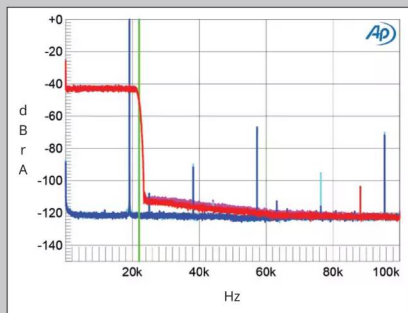


Fig.11 Vitus RI-101 Mk.II, network data, wideband spectrum of white noise at –4dBFS (left channel red, right magenta) and 19.1kHz tone at 0dBFS (left blue, right cyan) into 100k ohms with data sampled at 44.1kHz (20dB/vertical div.).

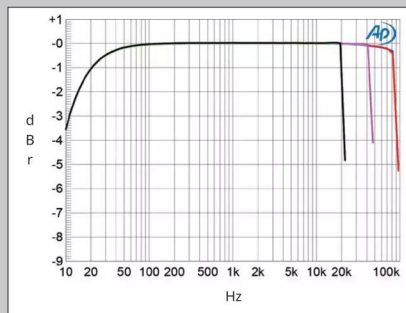


Fig.12 Vitus RI-101 Mk.II, network data, frequency response at –12dBFS into 100k ohms with data sampled at: 44.1kHz (left channel green, right gray), 96kHz (left cyan, right magenta), and 192kHz (left blue, right red) (1dB/vertical div.).

Aldo had told me that when the RI-101 Mk.II is first plugged in and set to “standby” mode, it requires 24–48 hours to heat stabilize. After that, once you power it up fully, it requires an hour’s warm-up to reach optimal sonic levels. Again, I did as told before listening.

Vitus’s shipping carton included a basic Apple remote. Although a customized remote was nearing completion and may be available as you read this, the Apple remote’s mute, volume, and input controls, augmented by an iPad Pro outfitted with both Roon and MConnect, were all I needed to control the unit.

My review strategy was simple. First, I’d listen to the Vitus RI-101 Mk.II with my reference Innuos Statement NG music server/Vivaldi Apex DAC/Upsampler Plus/Master Clock front-end connected to the integrated’s XLR inputs, and output the signal to my Wilson Audio Alexia V loudspeakers and active Lökē subwoofers. Setting the Vivaldi’s volume control to full (0) would remove it from the signal path and allow me to hear everything the Vitus’s volume attenuator could do.

Next, I’d bypass my reference front-end and run Ethernet directly from my EtherREGEN’s optimized 100Mbps port through the Nordost QNet switch’s 100Mbps ports into the Vitus’s Ethernet port and stream music through its optional DAC/streamer module. Because the Vitus RI-101 Mk.II has no internal storage, I stuck to Qobuz streams whenever possible. That limited me to a mere 130 million tracks, but somehow, I coped.

The sound

My first impression, using my reference Innuos/dCS front-end

for DAC/streaming, was extremely positive. I chose *American Counterpoints* (24/96 FLAC, Bright Shiny Things/Qobuz), a recording of music by oft-overlooked Black composers Julia Perry and Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson performed by the Experiential Orchestra and violinist Curtis Stewart, conducted by James Blachly. Though the music’s modernist bent didn’t put wind to my sails, so to speak, the sound was enticingly full and colorful. Focus and solidity were impressive.

I was so impressed by the music and sonics of *Takács Assad Labro* (24/88.2 FLAC, Yarlung Records/Qobuz) that I chose to review it for our May issue. On this disc, the superb Takács String Quartet, vocalist/pianist/composer Clarice Assad, and bandoneon player/composer Julien Labro perform their own music and pieces by Bryce Dessner, Milton Nascimento, and Kaija Saariaho. The sound was transparent and colorful, with a beautiful midrange and detail so well conveyed that I felt no need to return to my reference amplification components, which together—amps and preamp—cost \$100,000+ more than the Vitus integrated. (See Associated Equipment on page 85.)

When friend Scott visited, he requested “Four Kinds of Horses (Bright-Side Mix)” from Peter Gabriel’s recent album *i/o* (24/96 FLAC, Real World Productions/Qobuz). Gabriel released this recording in three mixes, Bright-Side, Dark-Side, and In-side, each created by a different mixing/mastering engineer. As one might well expect, the Bright-Side Mix’s top was bright and alive to a fault, but through the RI-101 Mk.II it was nicely balanced by a beautiful midrange and decent bass, and the soundstage was big.

measurements, continued

magenta and red traces in fig.12 show the reconstruction filter’s ultrasonic rolloff with data sampled at 44.1kHz. They reach full stop-band attenuation at just above half the sample rate (this indicated by the vertical green line), with the aliased image at 25kHz of a full-scale tone at 19.1kHz (cyan, blue) suppressed by 107dB. The third harmonic of the 19.1kHz tone lay close to -70dB (0.06%). The frequency response with 44.1kHz, 96kHz, and 192kHz data is flat almost to half of each sample rate then rolls off sharply (fig.12). The low-frequency rolloff in this graph, which reaches -3dB at

12Hz, was characteristic of the preamplifier outputs.

An increase in bit depth from 16 to 24, with dithered data representing a 1kHz tone at -90dBFS, dropped the RI-101’s noise floor by 5dB (fig.13). This implies a resolution of about 17 bits. When I played undithered data representing a tone at exactly -90.31dBFS, the waveform’s three DC voltage levels described by the data were obscured by noise (fig.14). This random noise can also be seen in the spectrum of the RI-101’s output when it was fed high-level 16-bit J-Test network data (fig.15). The

odd-order harmonics of the undithered low-frequency LSB-level squarewave lie close to the correct levels.

Although the new sample of the Vitus RI-101 Mk.II had both loudspeaker outputs working correctly and offered slightly lower noise and distortion than the original sample, it still didn’t perform as well as I expected on the test bench, either from its line-level analog inputs or from its Streamer digital input. The latter, in particular, has lower resolution than I usually find from a DAC that uses the ESS Sabre ES9038Pro chip.—John Atkinson

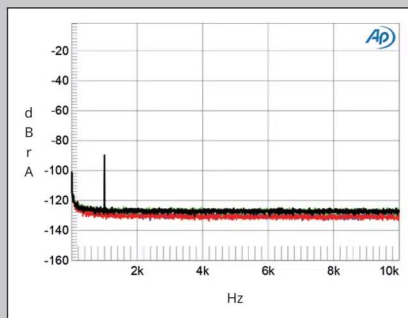


Fig.13 Vitus RI-101 Mk.II, network data, spectrum with noise and spurs of dithered 1kHz tone at -90dBFS with: 16-bit data (left channel green, right gray), 24-bit data (left blue, right red) (20dB/vertical div.).

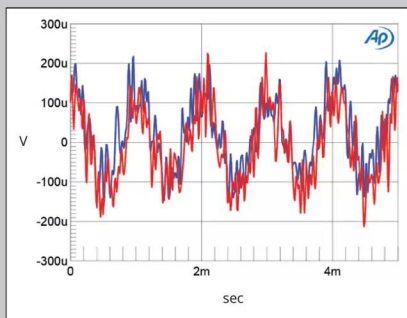


Fig.14 Vitus RI-101 Mk.II, network data, waveform of undithered 1kHz sine wave at -90.31dBFS, 16-bit data (left channel blue, right red).

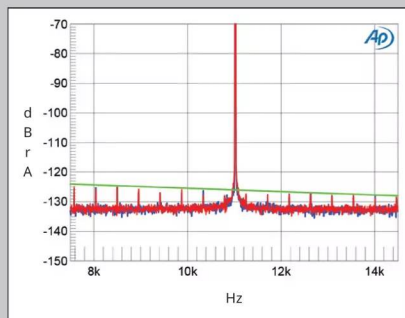


Fig.15 Vitus RI-101 Mk.II, network data, high-resolution jitter spectrum of analog output signal, 11.025kHz at -6dBFS, sampled at 44.1kHz with LSB toggled at 229Hz: 16-bit data (left channel blue, right red). Center frequency of trace, 11.025kHz; frequency range, ± 3.5 kHz.

The Dark-Side mix was considerably easier to listen to.

It was hardly a surprise that the RI-101 Mk.II's bass wasn't as strong, tightly focused, and refined as that from my far more expensive reference monoblocks; strong and tight bass is a big advantage of listening with well-designed, premium-priced separates. The Vitus bass timbres were *slightly* off, a bit soft and powdery in the center and lacking the last iota of resonant overtones.

This hardly diminished my enjoyment of music. Cellos were warm and plush, and music exhibited a natural, seductive flow. Even if I didn't hear every last iota of detail in Rafael Payare and the Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal's recording of Mahler's Symphony No.5 (24/96 FLAC, Pentatone/Qobuz), I was swept away by the music, performance, and recording. Soprano Sandrine Piau's moving rendition of Carl Loewe's lieder "Ach neige, du Schmerzenreiche" from *Chimère* (24/96 FLAC, Alpha/Qobuz) sounded nothing short of wonderful, distinguished by excellent air and extreme beauty.

Next, bypassing my reference front-end, I used Roon to stream files through the Vitus's optional streamer/DAC board. I was delighted by how much color, drive, and emotional energy the Vitus streamer/DAC conveyed. There may have been less organic flow to Payare's recording of the famed *Adagio* from Mahler's Fifth than I hear with my far more expensive reference source components. On the other hand, I was surprised to hear a faint gong approximately 4:28 into the movement. For all the times I've been seduced by this music on my reference system, I had never before heard that accidentally activated gong.

Beyond transmitting a surprising amount of detail, the Vitus RI-101 Mk.II's optional DAC/streamer pleased in the beauty department. On Piau's recently recorded *Reflet* (24/96 FLAC, Alpha/Qobuz), with L'Orchestre Victor Hugo conducted by Jean-François Verdier, Duparc's great song "Chanson triste" sounded gorgeous. In absolute terms, the piano could have sounded richer, the voice more substantial, but color and midrange warmth were right on and seductive.

The Vitus boys told me that some of their clients prefer the sound of MConnect software⁷ (or other playback options) with the Vitus DAC/streamer, so I gave MConnect a try. Overall texture, color, transparency, and focus improved on the above tracks, and I heard more warmth and fullness in the midrange. When Scott and I played "The Plum Blossom" from oboist Yusef Lateef's marvelous, superbly remastered *Eastern Sounds* (24/192 FLAC, Craft Recordings/Qobuz), the first word out of my friend's mouth was "nice." I couldn't have agreed more. One of these days, Scott and I need to ditch our busy schedules, stop taking notes, and spend 39 minutes listening to this album in silence.

Just days before I needed to pack up the Vitus for shipment to John Atkinson for measurement, Jim Austin asked me if I could suggest a recording that deserved to be the May issue's Recording of the Month. I proposed to expand my short rave review of the new recording of Benjamin Britten's Violin Concerto (and other early Britten works) performed by violinist Isabelle Faust and the Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, conducted by Jakub Hrůša (24/96 WAV, Harmonia Mundi/download). Once Jim gave the okay, I began listening anew, using my reference front-end to send signal through the Vitus RI-101 Mk.II.

If you look at that full-page review, you'll read multiple paragraphs filled with detailed descriptions of musical and emotional changes. It isn't possible to write "Just as tension builds to the breaking point, the orchestra re-enters, filled with grief. ... The music almost grinds to a halt as everything seems in danger of crashing down" unless your electronics are capable of transmitting the essential visceral and emotional impact of great music. In getting to the musical essence of Britten's marvelous concerto, the

ASSOCIATED EQUIPMENT

Digital sources dCS Vivaldi Apex DAC, Vivaldi Upsampler Plus, Vivaldi Master Clock, and Rossini Transport; EMM Labs DV2 Integrated DAC, Meitner MA3 Integrated DAC; Innuos Statement Next-Gen Music Server; Small Green Computer Sonore Deluxe opticalModule; Uptone Audio EtherREGEN with SOTM sCLK-OCX10 Master Clock and sPS-500 power supply; Finisar FTLF8519P3BNL and Broadcom/Avago AFBR-5718PZ 1GB SX-SFP, Gen 5 Fiber Optic modules; Nordost QNet switch and QSource linear power supplies (2); Sonore Audiophile Linear Power Supply; Synology 5-bay 1019+ NAS with Ferrum Hypsos linear/switching hybrid power supply; Linksys MR9000 mesh router and Arris modem; Apple 2023 iPad Pro and 2017 MacBook Pro laptop with 2.8GHz Intel i7, SSD, 16GB RAM.

Preamplifier Dan D'Agostino Momentum HD.

Power amplifiers Dan D'Agostino Momentum M400 MxV monoblocks, Accuphase A-300 monoblocks.

Loudspeakers Wilson Audio Specialties Alexia V with Lōkē subwoofers.

Cables Digital: Nordost Odin 1, Odin 2, and Valhalla 2 (USB and Ethernet), Frey 2 (USB adapter); AudioQuest WEL Signature; Wireworld Platinum Starlight Cat8 (Ethernet), OM1 62.5/125 multimode duplex (fiber optic). Interconnect (XLR): Nordost Odin 2 and Blue Heaven subwoofer, AudioQuest Dragon, Canare (subwoofers). Speaker: Nordost Odin 2, AudioQuest Dragon. AC: Nordost Odin 2, Valhalla 2, Valhalla 1; AudioQuest Dragon and Firebird; Kimber PK10 Palladian. Umbilical cords: Ghent Audio Canare on NAS; QSource Premium DC cables with Lemo terminations for QSources; SOTM sPS-500 umbilical cable for SOTM Master clock.

Accessories Grand Prix Monza 8-shelf double rack and amp stands, 1.5" Formula platform; Symposium Ultra Platform; Nordost 20-amp QB8 Mark III, QKore 1 and 6; Titanium and Bronze Sort Kones, Sort Lifts; Stromtank S 2500 Quantum MK II power generator, SEQ-5 Audio Distribution Bar; AudioQuest Niagara 7000 and 5000 power conditioners, NRG Edison outlets, JitterBugs; Environmental Potentials EP2050EE surge protector/filter; Wilson Audio Pedestals; A/V RoomService Polyflex Diffusers; Resolution Acoustics room treatment; Stillpoints Clouds (8); HRS DPX-14545 Damping Plates; Marigo Aida CD mat.

Listening room 20' L × 16' W × 9'4" H.—Jason Victor Serinus

Vitus RI-101 Mk.II did itself proud.

In sum

As someone spoiled by preamplifier/monoblock combinations that cost more than five times the price of the Vitus RI-101 Mk.II, I did my best to temper expectations before beginning this review. What a relief to discover that throughout my time with this integrated amplifier, the phrase "I could live happily with this baby for a long time" played on repeat in my head. Music through the Vitus RI-101 Mk.II sounded in line with the sensational sound I heard through the 17-times-more-expensive Vitus Masterpiece series DAC, preamp, and monoblock system I heard at AXPONA 2023. As tempting as it was to note what was absent, I instead found myself celebrating all that was present.

If you're looking for an integrated with optional DAC/streaming capabilities that you can live with for a long, long time, the Vitus RI-101 Mk.II is solidly recommended. ■

⁷The basic version of MConnect is free. It is also far clunkier than Roon and feature-poor.