RECOMMENDED COMPONENTS 2026

THE BEST HI-FI RANKED AND RATED

stereophile

ONLINE AUTHORITY: STEREOPHILE.COM

MARVELOUS MAGICO S2

UNCOMPROMISING ENGINEERING SERVING MUSICAL TRUTH

J.SIKORA ASPIRE
PREMIUM VINYL SPINNER AT A PERFECT PRICE

CH PRECISION M10 TWO-BOX MUSIC MASTER–THE ULTIMATE POWER AMP?

HIGH VALUE AND PERFORMANCE
THE ONKYO ICON A-50 INTEGRATED

APRIL 2026
$8.99 US
$10.99 CANADA

CHESS RECORDS AT 75 › A TANGERINE DREAM REVIVAL?

0 71486 34967 9

JASON VICTOR SERINUS

CH Precision M10

MONO POWER AMPLIFIER

A mono pair of CH Precision M10s ($210,000/pair as reviewed) declares its presence in capital letters. Each channel consists of two large units, each almost 2' high, linked by a total of four umbilical cords. While the "lighter" amplifier unit weighs almost 117lb, the toroidal transformer–based power supply unit tops out at nearly 172lb. That's a lot of metal.

If you dare stack the two units one atop the other (I had no choice in my modest-sized music room), each stack proclaims might and—given the front panel's minimalist Swiss styling—refinement.

On the levels of sound and music, the M10s offer something else entirely. As much as dynamics, even on dynamically limited 16/44.1 material, can be breathtaking from amplifiers that, in mono configuration, output 600Wpc into 4 ohms, there's another descriptor that more accurately encapsulates the M10's gifts. That word is "mastery." Rivaling most of the amplifiers I've had in-house for review in the past year, the M10s open their capacitors wide, welcome whatever is channeled to them, and pass it along with absolute confidence. They find no need to editorialize. Beyond the fact that they have their own distinct sound—I've never heard an amplifier that doesn't—what the M10s receive is what they send out into the world.

SPECIFICATIONS

Description Solid state, class-AB, dual-channel, configurable, modular power amplifier. Inputs: two balanced XLR, two single-ended RCA, two single-ended BNC, USB port, Ethernet port (as configured for review). Outputs: two XLR balanced outputs (pass through for daisy-chaining), two pairs of speaker binding posts per channel. Power output, Stereo Mode: 2 × 300W into 8 ohms (24.8dBW), 22 × 550W into 4 ohms (24.4dBW), 2 × 900W into 2 ohms (23.5dBW); Mono Mode: 1 × 600W into 4 ohms (24.8dBW), 1 × 1000W into 2 ohms (24.0dBW), 1 × 1600W into 1 ohm (23.0dBW); Bridged Mode: 1 × 1100W into 8 ohms (30.4dBW), 1 × 1700W into 4 ohms (29.3dBW), 1 × 2500W into 2 ohms (28.0dBW). Power consumption: <0.5W in standby; approx. 300W at idle and at normal listening levels. Frequency response, DC–500kHz: –3dB (1W at 8 ohms). THD+noise: 0.01% at 0% global feedback (100% local feedback), 0.002% at 100% global feedback (0% local feedback), 1kHz signal, bandwidth 22Hz–80kHz, 50W under 8 ohms (all operating modes). S/N ratio (unweighted): >132dB, stereo, monaural, and biamp modes, >135dB bridged mode. Input impedance: single-ended RCA or BNC, 47k ohms or 300 ohms. Balanced: XLR 94k ohms or 600 ohms.

Dimensions 17.32" (440mm) W × 22.05" (560mm) D × 11.22" (285mm) H. Weight: Analog Unit: 116.85lb (53kg), Power Supply 171.96lb (78kg).

Finish Silver, Anthracite, and Satin Gold.

Serial number of unit reviewed 15010500/01. Designed and built in Switzerland.

Price $110,000 for a single stereo unit; $210,000 for a mono pair (as configured for review). Prices as listed in silver; slight upcharge for Anthracite and Satin Gold. Approximate number of dealers: 13. Warranty: Three years, parts and labor.

Manufacturer CH Precision Sàrl, ZI Le Trési 6B, 1028 Préverenges, Switzerland. Tel: (41) (0)21-701-9040. Web: ch-precision.com.

Under the imposing hood

"All CH amplifiers can be configured as either stereo or mono amplifiers," Kevin Wolff, CH Precision's director of global sales, explained soon after he and John Giolas, VP of marketing for both Wattson Audio and CH Precision, visited Port Townsend to install the M10s in my music room. "They can also be configured in various modes, including stereo, mono, bridged, and biamp."

Audiophiles who begin with an M10 stereo configuration can easily upgrade to mono by purchasing an M10 upgrade amplifier and moving one of the input modules. An installer can perform the switch within 10 minutes in the comfort of the home listening environment. Another upgrade, which again is performed in house without need to ship units back and forth, installs two additional modules to enable the M10s to drive a passive subwoofer or work with speakers that have external crossovers. "Every amplifier in the CH Precision lineup, starting with our smallest, the A1.5, has more than adequate power to run a passive subwoofer and main array," Wolff said.

Of course, if money is no object, space is plentiful, and the subwoofers are passive, an audiophile could run four M10 mono amps, i.e., eight units total, for the main array and passive subwoofer. While Wolff has seen several such systems power unusually large speakers with passive subs, I have yet to be invited to such an installation, which is often located abroad.

Not only do these mono amps occupy considerable space, but they also require four 20-amp power cables, two per power supply, and three hours of warm-up time to reach the optimal internal temperature where they sound their best.

CH splits the amp into two boxes, analog and power, to isolate the noisiest element in the amplifier, the two 1800 VAC toroidal transformers in each power supply. Which is not to say that the entire power supply is in that box. The amplifier unit also houses part of the power supply in the form of various sizes of power-storing capacitors, putting the charge very close to where it will be needed for dynamic peaks.

Audiophiles who begin with an M10 stereo configuration can easily upgrade to mono by purchasing an M10 upgrade amplifier and moving one of the input modules.

"Small caps in a power supply provide speed and liquidity," Wolff said. "Small caps may run out of power quickly, but larger capacitors tend to be slow. To address this, we've built what we believe is a fairly unique, three-stage power supply that holds enormous amounts of power reserves in three progressively larger-sized capacitors. We start with very small capacitors, located right next to the output devices in the analog unit, that provide speed and liquidity and are replenished quickly. When the small capacitors run out of power, as when driving a big crescendo in a Mahler symphony, rather than reverting to the transformer for power or replenishment they draw upon medium or much larger-sized capacitors that fill the huge center section of the amplifier. The largest capacitors I've ever seen in a commercial amp are in the third stage, the power supply chassis. In total, the M10's capacitance is 1 farad, or 1,000,000µF, operating at less than 100V. That's an enormous amount of power reserve.

"Our goal is to avoid drawing power directly from the transformer and instead let it fill the large caps. Only when those storage capacitors run out of power must you rely on power coming directly from the two transformers in each amplifier. Due to the electrical frequency (50Hz and 60Hz, depending on market), there

MEASUREMENTS

In common with CH Precision's M1.1 amplifier, the M10 includes the facility to adjust feedback on the fly via the company's intuitive app. In the M1.1, feedback could be adjusted to the nearest 10%; in the M10, the adjustment has 1% increments. Of course, the "0% feedback" setting does not really mean 'zero compensation' as there's always sufficient local feedback to manage the bandwidth, gain and stability of the M10's input and output stages.

With feedback set to 100%, the M10 showed no significant sensitivity to changes in operating temperature. THD when cold was 0.00032%, increasing to 0.00034% as the temperature rose to 35°C (see fig.1). Over the next 30 minutes, the heatsink temperature stabilized at 43°C, and THD settled back to 0.00032% (all ref. 1kHz/10W/8 ohms).

In the default '0.0dB' setting, overall gain is +23.5dB, requiring 3.26V from a balanced (XLR) source to raise the rated 300W into 8 ohms. The M10's A-weighted S/N ratio was 106.6dB (ref. 0dBW). This is a remarkable result.

As expected, the "100%" global feedback setting delivered the lowest distortion (fig.2, black trace) and the lowest output impedance (0.006–0.017 ohm, 20kHz–20kHz). Switching to 80% feedback (fig.2, cyan trace) increased distortion from 0.00018–0.014% to 0.0007–0.042% (20Hz–20kHz/10W) and output impedance to 0.02–0.03 ohm. Decreasing further to 60% feedback (orange trace) gave 0.003–0.07% distortion and 0.037–0.04 ohm output impedance, respectively. At 40% (green trace) the M10's distortion is 0.004–0.1%; at 20% (purple trace), it was 0.0045–0.12%, and at 0% global feedback (red trace), distortion was 0.005–0.19% (all ref. 20Hz–20kHz, 10W into 8 ohms).

Note that fig.2 has a logarithmic Y axis, so the differences in distortion appear less significant with the lowest feedback levels. In fact there is a regular increase in THD

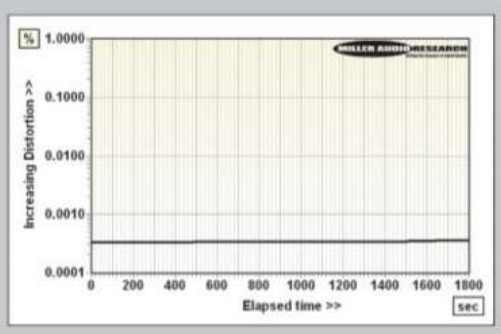


Fig.1 Distortion ref. 1kHz, 10W into 8 ohms output over 30mins (1800 seconds) from cold to 35°C internal heatsink temperature. The heatsink temperature stabilized at 43°C after one hour.

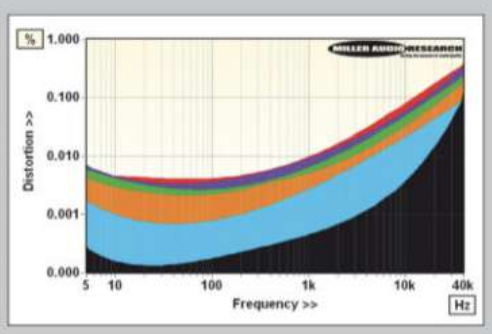


Fig.2 Distortion versus frequency, 5Hz–40kHz at 10W into 8 ohms. Black, 100% feedback; cyan, 80% feeback; orange, 60% feedback; green, 40% feedback; purple, 20% feedback; red, 0% feedback.

Global feedback can limit harmonic distortion to "vanishingly low levels," but using too much global feedback can make an amplifier sound lifeless.

is some smearing in the time domain at the multiples, which in the US is 60Hz, 120Hz, 240Hz, etc. By drawing power from the large storage reservoir, we avoid this. This is why we have multiple capacitor stages with caps of different sizes, all proprietary, that are built to exacting tolerances. We want to maintain sweetness even during the most outrageous crescendos, so you can hear the flute in its precise location in the orchestra while the rest of the world is thundering down around it."

Wolff told me that he'd seen people fall in love with the sound of voices amplified by 50Wpc amplifiers only to discover that those amplifiers fall apart on a Mahler symphony. Some weeks later, I twice experienced exactly that at Warsaw Audio Video 2025.

Wolff also said that one of the keys to CH Precision's success is that almost half their employees are engineers tasked with creating new solutions. One of those solutions is ExactBias.

"Manufacturer XYZ may claim they biased their amp to 10W class-A before it slips into class-AB," Wolff noted. "Technically, that means it's an AB amp. CH Precision constantly adjusts bias and compares the amp's temperature at the device level. To make this possible, they use a five-legged transistor where the two extra legs provide data. We constantly monitor the incoming signal and the temperature of each output device and adjust bias to maintain stability throughout. The M10s like running in the mid-40°C range, but we can adjust the bias so they sound good (if not as good) at 20°C."

measurements, continued

with each 20% reduction in feedback. At the 0% feedback setting, the M10's output impedance rose to 0.075–0.086 ohm, offering roughly 11x less damping at low frequencies than with 100% feedback. All this feeds into the overall system sound.

Regardless of the feedback applied, the M10's response is flat to +0.0/–0.07dB into 8 ohms, –0.08dB into 4 ohms, and –0.10dB into 2 ohms (all ref. 20Hz–20kHz). With 0% feedback, there will be slightly more susceptibility to swings in the loudspeaker impedance. Otherwise, wideband, the frequency response has –1dB limits beyond 1Hz–100kHz into 8 ohms, while the dual-mono layout yields a superb 102dB stereo separation at 1kHz and 78dB at 20kHz.

As a function of power output, with the M10's feedback set to 100%, distortion holds to 0.0003–0.0006% limits from 1W to the rated 300W into 8 ohms at 1kHz and 0.0045–0.45% limits from 1W to 100W at 20kHz. Distortion is low but increases more markedly with increasing power at higher frequencies (see fig.3). Talking of which, the M10's power output is generous in the extreme, comfortably exceeding its 300W rating at 395Wpc into 8 ohms and 710Wpc into 4 ohms.

Moreover, CH Precision's massive, multistage PSU has the capacity to support 435W, 850W, 1.64kW, and a full 3.04kW into 8, 4, 2, and 1 ohm loads, respectively, under dynamic conditions (see fig.4). This represents a "clean" 55.1A of current (ref. 1kHz at 8 ohms for 10ms at <1% THD). Few power amplifiers are capable of higher output. Among those tested, the Gryphon Diablo 333 managed 3.1kW (55.7A), the Musical Fidelity Titan achieved 5.96kW (77.2A), the D'Agostino Relentless 800 attained 8.29kW (91.1A), and the full-blown monoblock Relentless flagship capped out in arc-welder territory at 11.325kW (106A) – all ref. 1kHz at 1 ohm, <1% THD. The M10 will surely be powerful enough to drive any loudspeaker that crosses its path.—**Paul Miller**

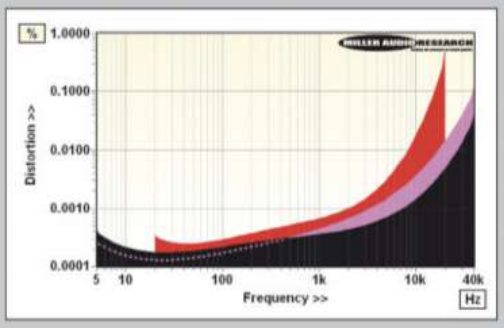


Fig.3 Distortion versus frequency ref. 5Hz–40kHz at 1W into 8ohms (black), 10W into 8 ohms (pink), and ref. 20Hz–20kHz at 100W into 8 ohms (red).

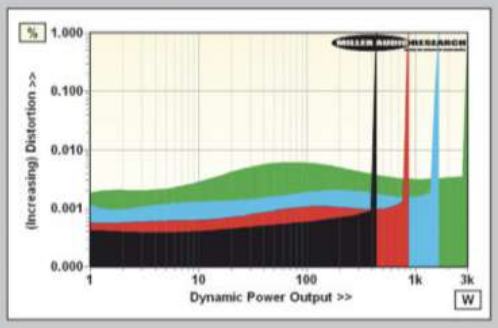


Fig.4 Dynamic power output (ref. 1kHz, 10ms) versus distortion into 8 ohms (black), 4 ohms (red), 2 ohms (blue), and 1 ohm (green).

Wolff said he never saw the M10s output more than 50Wpc in my room. I decided to confirm this for myself later on. He also said he's seen the M10s output in excess of 2500W with large, inefficient speakers or at shows when exhibitors play uncompressed music *really* loud. If we'd turned the volume up that loud in my music room, I doubt I could have continued my reviewing career.

Special features

According to Wolff, all solid state amplifiers use local feedback, global feedback, or a mixture of the two. Global feedback can limit harmonic distortion to "vanishingly low levels," but using too much global feedback can make an amplifier sound lifeless. Feedback is also used to reduce an amplifier's output impedance, which seems to be the main focus here. (See below.)

Since their very first amplifier, CH Precision has allowed users to vary the ratio of local to global feedback. In the M10, you can change the ratio by a single percentage point, while in the lower-priced M1.1 you can only alter the ratio in 10% increments. All feedback-ratio adjustments are performed by dealers during the initial installation. If a CH Precision amplifier owner switches speakers, dealers are expected to return to perform further adjustments. No dealer is needed, however. The adjustment is easily accomplished from the front panel or the mobile app, which for now is Android-only.

"When I've adjusted M10s, I've never used more than 4% global feedback," Wolff said. "Global feedback tightens the amplifier's sound. It maintains all the correct timing cues, without time smearing, by adjusting the output impedance or damping factor. But on a speaker like your Wilson Alexia V's that have only one set of speaker terminals, if you use too much global feedback, it may fix the bass but negatively impact the midrange and the upper frequencies. When I adjusted your M10s in your room, we only added 1% global feedback. We agreed that 2% and 3% global feedback diminished overall performance. We never tried anything beyond 3% because I know from experience not to bother when the speakers are set up correctly, which yours are."

The M10s also allow you to set the optimum gain in relation to your line stage and cabling. There is no absolute optimal gain or input sensitivity setting; everything is system-, room-, and cable-dependent. In my room and system, Wolff adjusted the M10s' input sensitivity by 0.5dB increments until we found what sounded best. We made the opposite adjustment on the L10 preamplifier, which also allows for fine gain adjustments.

Florian Cossy speaks

CH Precision founder, CEO, and former chief designer Florian Cossy added additional commentary.

"From the release of our first amp, the A1, over 12 years ago, we focused on two things. The first was the match between the amp and the speaker. Some believe you need a huge damping factor to enable an amplifier to work as a perfect voltage source. But in some cases, that's not true. Instead, we play with the damping factor by adjusting the amount of global feedback to achieve the optimal coupling between power amplifier, speaker, and room. In the M10, as Kevin explained, that adjustment is in 1% increments.

"In the real world, speakers should be driven with current, not voltage. That's my opinion, at least. What makes a speaker driver move is the image of the current you send to it; it's not the image of the voltage you send to it. The reason we drive them in voltage is because speaker manufacturers develop speakers with voltage sources. But because that's an imperfect way to develop them, we compensate by adjusting the global feedback, which mimics a little bit of the current-driven mode.

"When we first developed our global feedback adjustment, some in the industry said it would be impossible to do because it wasn't stable. They were incorrect.

"The second thing we addressed is bias. ExactBias ensures that bias into the output transistors remains stable regardless of time, temperature, and the music you are playing.[1] Our circuitry is really fast—faster than most amplifiers currently adjust bias in response to music."

I asked why the M10s take three hours to warm up from standby. Cossy pointed to their huge heatsinks and the amount of heat the M10 generates. If he had designed smaller heatsinks, warm-up time would have been less, but the amps would have gotten very hot.

"Having two cabinets for the M10 ensures that we have plenty of energy, stored locally, to respond to almost any demand," he said. "We don't rely too heavily on the transformers which are housed separately and are there to fill the capacitors."

Setup challenges

As with all CH Precision gear, the front panel is dominated by a large display. The one on the amplifier panel can be programmed to show input, input impedance termination, low pass filter (if employed), absolute phase polarity, mute, instantaneous power, amplifier mode, and more. Mine were set to show instantaneous power consumption. The front panel has an illumined logo in the top left corner that lights during standby but can be turned off during operation. Five small buttons aligned vertically to the right of the display enable users to control and set a host of options. I left most of the button-pushing to Wolff. I only used the top button, which toggled the amps between on and idle.

The two units' back panels are not simple. To attempt to detail every connector would induce a soporific state in most readers

1 ExactBias operates in the M10's output stage.

and certainly this writer, so we'll just publish a photo and focus on the basics. On the back panel are two sets of speaker cable binding posts to facilitate biwiring, single sets of RCA, BNC, and XLR inputs, balanced XLR analog outputs for amplifier chain connection, an earth-ground socket, a ground-lift switch,[2] and a signal-ground socket. And more.

The power supply's rear panel is simpler and less crowded. It includes a main power switch, two 20A IEC receptacles, easy-to-access fuse holders for the amp's high power and standby sections, and a few other usuals.

When you turn the amplifier on, the analog section's front panel displays an initializing/charging sequence. When it's complete, the "regular" user-programmable settings appear on the display.

The only option available for setting up the M10 mono's four boxes in my room was to place each power supply unit directly on the floor, one on each side of my double equipment rack, with a lighter (117lb!) amplifier unit on top. CH Precision's specially developed titanium spikes were used to isolate the amplifiers from vibration.

When I mentioned the space constraints of my room and that a mono stack of amplifier and power supply was too large and heavy for my Grand Prix Monza amp stands, Cossy assured me that placing the amps directly on a hard floor—mine is Cali bamboo atop a concrete slab—would be sufficient. Nonetheless, he said, "A dedicated stand is going to give you another level of clarity, subtlety, and more." I have done my best to take this into account while assessing the M10s' performance.

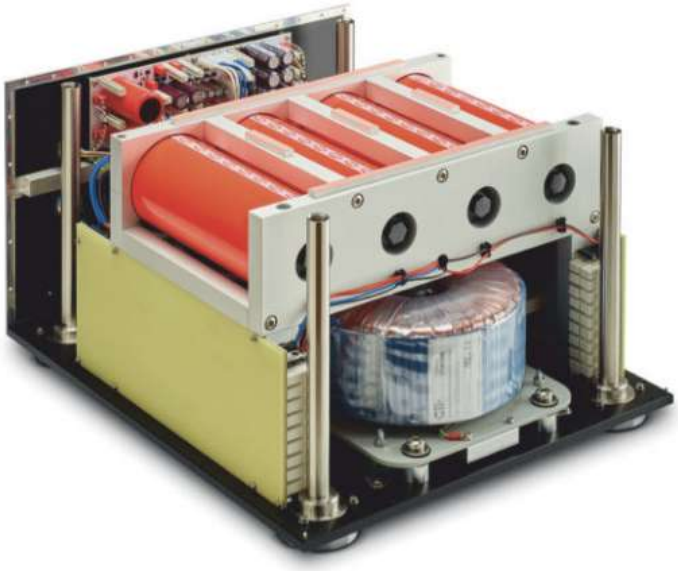
Control was so impeccable that, once I had retuned my system to its new room treatment, preamp options, and everything else, I was free to focus on the music.

Ever curious to discover what more might be heard, I tried placing Wilson Audio Pedestals between the power supply and amplifier units. Not only did this *not* improve sound; the sound became less focused, which has not been my experience when using Pedestals under other amplifiers, preamplifiers, and so on.

Placing the amps on the floor meant that keeping each unit's four heavy umbilical cables and two 20A power cables off the floor was impossible. At one time I managed cable isolation with incredibly rare, artfully sculpted green Styrofoam blocks grown in the only region in southern Portugal where the soil and climate are conducive to Styrofoam cultivation. But those blocks fled the roost, snuck back onto a cargo ship bound for their homeland, and demanded their tariff back. Eventually I surrendered and limited myself to separating interconnects and speaker cables from power cables.

The M10's 27-page manual[3] devotes most of 10 pages to adjusting

2 We did not play with the M10's ground lift switch. Not only had we previously experimented with the L10's ground lift and found that the "Open" position sounded better, but Wolff also knew that "Open" nearly always sounded best on the M10. "You have signal ground connected to the amps by way of Pin1 on the XLRs," he explained.
3 See ch-precision.com/m10-reference-power-amplifier.



options and updating firmware. In the event you wish to delude yourself into thinking doing so is a romp in the park, consider this entry on the manual's troubleshooting page: "Lost in the settings? Restore factory settings and start your setup again." I let Wolff push the buttons and navigate the settings, after which we both evaluated various feedback and gain options. He didn't do anything more than any knowledgeable CH Precision dealer/installer would do.

There are many more options, but I'll only mention a couple. You can adjust the brightness of the display when it is dimmed and fine-tune the low-brightness gamma curves to perfectly match the brightness and color of other displays. You can choose among seven standard display shades or a user-defined RGB color. If you won't be able to sleep without knowing everything you can adjust via the front panel or mobile app, please consult the manual, which is available online.

The display mode I chose showed power consumption in watts. I ignored it most of the time, but eventually I turned up the volume on big-boned symphonic fare and affirmed Wolff's assertion that the M10 never consumed more than 50Wpc in my room.

After my loaner Dan D'Agostino Relentless preamplifier flew the coop, I had two remaining preamp choices: the CH Precision L10 and the Soulution 727. While their prices are in the same ballpark, they sound very different. Since switching between them was fairly simple, I did so often.

Because the M10s arrived while I was reviewing the L10 and during a period in which several changes to room treatment and speaker position occurred, it took a while to figure out how to get the best out of everything. I waited to begin taking notes until after my system and I together had reached equilibrium.

The sound

No matter what I threw at this pair of CH Precision M10s, they remained unfazed. The word "distortion" never crossed my mind. Control was so impeccable that, once I had retuned my system to its new room treatment, preamp options, and everything else, I was free to focus on the music I played.

The M10s' ability to convey dynamic gradations and nuance equaled or excelled that of the best amplifiers I've had in my system. If I'm not making an absolute statement, it's for only one reason: Absolutes make little sense in the context of my room and system, which are constantly changing. Just as some opera queens speak of the evolution of operatic interpretation in the 20th century and beyond as BC and AC—Before Callas and After Callas—I can legitimately describe my system as BV/N and AV/N: Before and After dCS Varèse and Innuos Nazaré.

One thing the M10 is *not* is an attention-seeker. While bass is well-controlled, it is not overwhelmingly powerful. Colors are true, but they are not of the strutting male peacock sort.

Instead of throwing musical example after musical example at you, I'll start with the most transcendent experience I had with the M10s. Given the frequent Facebook postings by my friend Emil Miland, longtime cellist of the San Francisco Opera Orchestra and one of the late mezzo-soprano Lorraine Hunt Lieberson's closest friends, and the recent hi-rez PCM digital remastering of her famed Handel Arias recording with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment conducted by Harry Bicket, I have been thinking a lot about her voice and artistry.

Just days before I began writing this review, I cued up Qobuz's 16/44.1 stream of her 1998 recital in London's Wigmore Hall, *Songs by Mahler, Handel & Peter Lieberson* (Wigmore Hall Live), accompanied by Roger Vignoles and issued by the BBC as WHLive0013. I still recall the night that, through the Gryphon Essence monoblocks I reviewed in December 2020, I was transported to what felt like another dimension by Hunt Lieberson's artistry during her performance of "Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen" (I am lost to the world) from Mahler's *Five Rückert-Lieder*. I've played this recording many times since, but it has never moved me as it did that night.

Until a few nights ago, that is, when I played all five of the

LORRAINE HUNT LIEBERSON LIVE FROM WIGMORE HALL

When the Wigmore Hall Live label was launched in 2005, the great mezzo-soprano Lorraine Hunt Lieberson had only a few months to live: She died of breast cancer in July 2006, age 52. The hunt for lost recordings to memorialize her artistry led directly to her November 30, 1998, Wigmore Hall recital, broadcast that day as part of BBC Radio 3's Noonday Concert series and preserved in the BBC archives. That recital was released on the Wigmore Hall Live label on January 1, 2007, six months after Hunt Lieberson's passing.

How is it that an archival broadcast recording became a widely adored audiophile favorite? I was ready to credit Tony Faulkner, the mastering engineer, but first I thought I'd write and ask him. "I would have done no significant interventions in mastering for Wigmore Live," he wrote in his reply. "Just checking overall peak level, managing applause, removal of continuity talk from the presenter, repairing any digital zits, and logging cue points for the individual tracks. ... The beauty of the recording is down to three things. Lorraine sang like an angel with no artificial mannerisms. Roger Vignoles is a very sensitive accompanist. The engineer wisely let the performances speak for themselves with the minimum of intervention. The acoustic in Wigmore Hall is good for recitals like this, and the engineer spared us the 21st century misery of adding digital reverb willy nilly to make it sound as though it had been recorded in an Olympic swimming pool. The engineer deserves praise for letting the music speak and staying out of the way."

Who was this virtuous engineer, uncredited as so many have been over time? The list of candidates should include John Thorne and Stephen Rinker, but in my research, Tracy Ross emerged as the favorite. All are, or were, BBC staff engineers at the time.—**Jim Austin**

ASSOCIATED EQUIPMENT

Digital sources dCS Varèse five-piece music system, Rossini CD/SACD transport; EMM Labs DV2i DAC, Innuos Nazaré Music Server and PhoenixNET network switch; Small Green Computer Sonore opticalModule Deluxe (2); Broadcom/Avago AFBR-5718PZ 1GB SX-SFP, Gen 5 Fiber Optic modules (2); Nordost QSource linear power supply (2); Sonore Audiophile Linear Power Supply; Synology 5-bay 1019+ NAS with Ferrum Hypsos linear/switching hybrid power supply; ASUS AX6000 and RT-AX88U Pro mesh routers and Netgear Nighthawk modem; Apple 2023 iPad Pro and 2025 MacBook Air.
Preamplifiers Dan D'Agostino Relentless, Soulution 727, CH Precision L10.
Power amplifiers Dan D'Agostino Momentum M400 MxV monoblocks, Audio Research 330M monoblocks, Accuphase A-300 monoblocks.
Loudspeakers Wilson Audio Specialties Alexia V with Lōke subwoofers.
Cables Digital: Nordost Odin 2, Valhalla 2 (USB and Ethernet), Frey 2 (USB adapter); AudioQuest WEL Signature; Wireworld Platinum Starlight Cat8 (Ethernet), OM1 62.5/125 multimode duplex (fiberoptic). Interconnect (XLR): Nordost Odin 2 and Blue Heaven (subwoofer), AudioQuest Dragon. 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.
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-4000 MK II XT power generator, SEQ-5 Audio Distribution Bar; AudioQuest Niagara 7000 and 5000 power conditioners, NRG Edison outlets; Environmental Potentials EP2050EE surge protector/filter; Wilson Audio Pedestals; Artnovion Lagos and Alps diffusers and bass corner traps, A/V RoomService Polyflex diffusers, Nihon Onkyo Engineering AGS diffusers, Resolution Acoustics room treatment; Stillpoints Clouds (8); HRS DPX-14545 Damping Plates.
Dedicated music room 20' L × 16'4" W × flattens at 9'4" H.—**Jason Victor Serinus**

Rückert Songs while stroking the only surviving member of "The Three Terrorers of Bell Street" canine clutch, the beloved Guy Luvberg. Hunt Lieberson's singing was so enrapturing, so filled with emotion and understanding, that I couldn't take notes. I sat in rapt silence hearing singer and piano so present, clear, and natural sounding that it felt as though I was sitting in one of the five front rows in Wigmore Hall. Nothing separated me from the holy reverence and sincerity that this great artist channeled through her voice and being.

One thing stirred me from my reverie. Hunt Lieberson's intensity almost blasted me from my seat during her life-affirming account of spiritual surrender in "Um Mitternacht" (At midnight). I had to catch my breath. That's when I realized how well and unflinchingly the M10s convey dynamic gradations and how expertly her sizable dynamic range was captured on this recording.

The opening song, "Ich atmet' einen linden Duft" (I breathed a gentle fragrance of the lime tree), requires a singer to smoothly negotiate a leap from A to F[4] without any break in vocal production or shift in volume. Janet Baker's recording with Sir John Barbirolli and The Hallé Orchestra (16/44.1 MQA FLAC, Warner/Tidal) is famed for the sweetness of a top note that embodies the fragrance of lime blossoms. Hunt Lieberson's performance is different—her focus is more on blessed radiance—but it is no less moving or smoothly negotiated. I hadn't fully realized how marvelously she conveys the preciousness of the moment until I played her recording through the M10s.

Hunt Lieberson was not the only diva whose artistry I explored. On an earlier occasion, I compared studio (16/44.1 FLAC, RCA/BMG Heritage/Qobuz) and live (16/44.1 FLAC, Blaricum CD Company/Qobuz) versions of Grace Slick and Jefferson Airplane's *Surrealistic Pillow* and its era-defining anthem, "White Rabbit." Oh my God, how confidently that woman belted. What better amp to appreciate that through than the ever-confident M10?

I turned to another unforgettable diva of the same era, Janis Joplin. One of the greatest music experiences of my life was standing directly in front of her, maybe 50' away, as she performed an impromptu free concert under a gazebo in Lindell Park in St. Louis around 1968. Years later, after so much discussion of her vocal deterioration and early death from alcohol, drugs, and self-abuse, I'd forgotten how sweetly, softly, and subtly she could negotiate a phrase. Now, thanks to the M10s, I sat mesmerized during "Piece of my Heart (Take 6)," performed with Big Brother and the Holding Company on *Sex, Dope & Cheap Thrills* (24/88.2 FLAC, Columbia/Legacy/Qobuz), and her posthumously released "Me and Bobby McGee" from *Pearl* (24/96 FLAC, Columbia/Legacy/Qobuz). Again, nothing stood between me and the music.

That was a great night. Immediately after Janis, I played Ravel's two *Mélodies hébraïques*, sung by the great mezzo Cecilia Bartoli on her wonderful 30-year-old recital *Chant D'Amour: Mélodies Françaises*, with pianist Myung-Whun Chung (16/44.1 FLAC, Decca/Qobuz). I'd played this album many times in CD format in my prestreaming days, but I'd never heard any system maintain such a firm, effortless hold on the mezzo-soprano's voice when she opens and darkens her tone to emphasize the intense prayerful longing at the heart of "Kaddish," the Jewish prayer for the dead. The opportunity this system offered to appreciate the charge conveyed by the undertones in Bartoli's voice was remarkable.

Let me not forget the startling experience of listening to the vehemence in Unsuk Chin's *Šu for Sheng and Orchestra*, recorded live by Wu Wei and the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra and conducted almost 20 years later by the same Myung-Whun Chung[5] (24/44.1 FLAC MQA, Deutsche Grammophon/Tidal). Want to revel in power as well as beauty? Try some heavy-duty orchestral fare through the M10s.

Not every listening experience through the M10s was equally glorious. But even when they failed to transport, I still felt total admiration for the confidence and mastery with which they delivered what the recording engineers want us to hear.

Summing up

I've invoked the "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" analogy numerous times over the years. Here, it's the only phrase that comes to mind that can encapsulate both the sheer physical presence of the M10 and its potential to convey the heavenly potential of notes on a page or screen. It's an amp capable of elevating God-given artistry to a level that countless acolytes strive to attain. If you have the means to obtain the M10, I urge you to give it the time and attention it deserves to determine if it is a match. For many financially fortunate audiophiles, it will be. ■

4 If my aging pitch pipe with the one unsounding note hasn't failed me entirely.
5 Myung-Whun Chung becomes music director of Milan's La Scala opera house at the end of 2026. He is only the second non-Italian (and the first Asian) director of the famed house since its inception. Empress Maria Theresa of Austria began constructing the current La Scala opera house the year the American Revolution started. Its predecessor, Teatro Regio Ducale, opened at the end of 1717 and hosted the premieres of three early Mozart operas.