

# decent exposure



After new investment and a spring clean Exposure has launched an all new integrated amp at the audiophile public. Simon Pope welcomes the famous brand back.

Cast your mind back ten years and think of five leading British audiophile amplifier manufacturers. The name Exposure would invariably be on the list. At one point in its previous existence, it was practically head to head with the likes of Naim. However when the latter, under the visionary leadership of the late Julian Vereker, started to expand its empire, Exposure stuck to its humble origins. Consequently a company, that perhaps should have deserved wider recognition since its launch in 1977, didn't fulfil its potential share of the hi-fi market.

Recently it has struggled, and even went through an abortive sale until a glimmer of light was spotted at the end of the tunnel. The far east is always interested in investing in 'traditional' British hi-fi brands like Exposure whose names carry prestige, and with this in mind Malaysian money appeared on the table back in March 2000. Thus was born the new Exposure Electronics Ltd.

This new found financial stability meant the company could start manufacturing with little constraint on finance or time, at a lower price. It's currently working on the next wave of products, including CD players, tuners and amplifiers, and also plans to venture into Home Cinema. 'Old' Exposure front man John Farlowe is the newly appointed chairman, with Andrew Whittle brought in as MD. Whilst finance is from Malaysia, the first products are still fully manufactured in the company's Sussex HQ, although gradual

development in the far east may well occur, with assembly probably based still in the UK.

The first new product was the non-remote version of the 2010 amplifier. The version we have here has remote controlled volume and input selection as well as numerous tweaks on the original. Aesthetics are still very much in the traditional Exposure mode, with a no-nonsense attractive look that retains an air of specialist hi-fi. It's straightforward enough, with most of the emphasis on the inside. Corners are nicely rounded with an overlapping front plate adorned with two smoothly motorised knobs (Alps volume pot and input selector) that feel good (and expensive) to the touch. Exposure has made a nod to modernity with the inclusion of three blue LEDs on the 'titanium' silver fascia (also available in classic 'eighties' satin black), and they're quite the brightest I've seen too. You can always save on electricity though, as the amp can double up as room lights.

Round the back we have connections for six line inputs - our sample had no phono inputs but a MM or MC stage is available for £ 100 extra. Two sets of 4mm loudspeaker sockets are flush with the casing. There is also a pre out for upgrading to the soon to be launched power amplifier in the range. Inside there is output circuit protection in the event of shorting. Power is conservatively rated at 50W per channel. It's of sensible dimensions and sensible weight, and all components in the 2010 come with a three year guarantee.



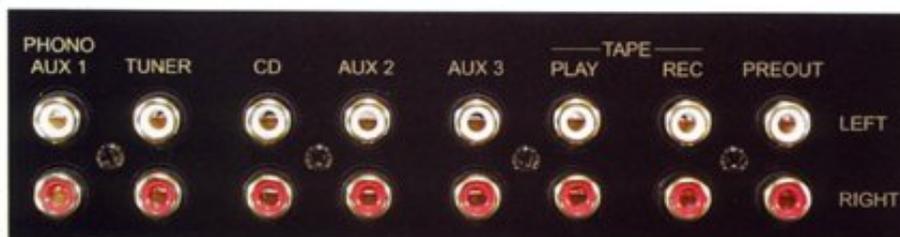
## SONIC SLAM

I say 'conservatively' rated, because those 50 watts sound like a heck of a lot more. Using a Linn Genki CD player, Mission 782 loudspeakers and Nordost cabling, I was immediately hit with a fast, punchy sound very much in the old Exposure vein. It's no wonder that the company was always compared to Naim, as the sound is fundamentally similar. There's an overall presence, control and bass a very involving listen. After burning in the 2010 for a couple of days the amp really came into its own and a tad more warmth was added to the sound to give a better tonal balance.

It's a superb performer with rock. The Screaming Tree's 'Dust' was first in the Genki's drawer and I was instantly hit with a big guitar sound that was both powerful and cohesive. Mark Lanegan's gruff, sixty-a-day voice was realistic and forward, with the drum (one of the best ever recorded, in my view) extraordinarily detailed and powerfully driven. Most impressive though was the tight and deep bass control. Low end grunt is rarely found at this price coupled with such control and tunefulness. Such slam was also found in Underworld's electronic dance music. 'Push, Upstairs' from 'Beaucoup Fish' had relentless energy and drive, bass was solid and taut and the treble showed real detail, with all the tiny intricacies of the percussion present and correct. Still, it wasn't quite the most neutral or smooth sound I'd ever heard, though.

Moving to classical showed how the 2010 excelled in three-dimensionality. Whilst the previous Exposure sound could be somewhat two-dimensional and flat, the new amp had an ambience and depth with classical that was classical that I frankly didn't expect. Pierre Bouieze's note-perfect reading of Mahler's ninth symphony is one of DG's latest audiophile-quality recordings, and has a spacious depth to the sound which was highlighted by the Exposure. The enormous orchestra had weight and presence but wasn't artificially pushed forward, giving a naturalness to the orchestra matched at this price only by Audio Analogue's Puccini SE. What the Exposure doesn't have to same degree as the Puccini is a sweetness of treble that benefits classical music, but at least its great dynamics and weight make up for it. This said, it's still far less raw than previous Exposure amps, and adds a touch of ambience, making its reproduction of classical music superior to its predecessors.

This new Exposure sound is highly addictive. It combines the slam, power and immediacy of the old amps with an ambience that was lacking before. The sound, whilst tiring to some ears perhaps, is less dry and sterile and now enjoys some warmth too. It still isn't for 'old buffers' though - that isn't what Exposure is about - so if it's EL34-style sweetness you're after you should still look elsewhere. A fine amp for the price, then, that prefers kicking rock or banging techno over the impressionistic mist of Debussy's orchestration. Highly recommended as a step up from entry level integrations.



### WORLD VERDICT



Audiophilia at a sensible price, with a large,

generous sound that's  
cohesive and controlled. A  
rocking sound that's not for  
the feint hearted.