

FIRST TESTS



Exposure's remote amp stuns

★★★★★

**Exposure XXVRC
Amplifier**

For Transparency
across the frequency
range; well thought
out remote control

Against Speaker
outlets may limit
some users; that's all

Verdict A very fine
integrated amplifier,
just as we've come to
expect from
Exposure, and it's
good to see the
remote system's
been well thought
through, not just
bolted on

The old belief was simple - the fewer facilities, the better the sound. But all that's changing, and today buyers of even the very best equipment demand user-convenience, for which read remote control. Hence the arrival of the Exposure XXV RC.

Yes, £1000 may seem like a lot for an amp that delivers only 55W per channel, and Exposure acknowledges that the XXV may not even seem to go as loud as its previous amps, due to reduced levels of distortion in the new model. But what neither figures on paper nor consideration of loudness acknowledges is that this is one of the sweetest, cleanest and yet most rhythmically exciting integrated amps you can buy. Simplified signal paths, allied to a hefty transformer and generous power supply reserves give this amp a directness and dynamic ability way beyond that of, say, the £500-700 remote amp competition.

With five line-ins, a tape loop, plus separate record and listen selectors, the Exposure will fit in with all but the most complex systems.



The phono stage has been left out to avoid compromises to keep within the price, Exposure having a standalone phono stage on the way. And what do we read into the provision of buttons to control a Philips based CD player? That's right - watch this space for the soon-to-be-released £1050 Exposure CD player. Otherwise the remote's a joy to use, allowing minute adjustment of volume, a mute function, and source selection.

The only problem may arise with the speaker outlets. These use single pairs of 4mm sockets only, so biwiring, or using an active subwoofer, is a bit tricky. If you plan to explore these avenues, get your dealer to supply appropriate cable terminations: the amp's more susceptible than most to short-circuit damage.

But does it play music! Spin rock or dance tracks and the gets down to business in no-nonsense fashion, with rhythm sections beautifully paced, plus excellent projection of frontline performers and a glorious sting and sizzle in the high percussion. It sounds free and unrestrained, throwing up big sonic pictures between, around and beyond your speakers and placing performers within them in totally natural fashion.

With jazz or classical pieces (or indeed any recording of mainly acoustic instruments) it's wonderful: the combination of open, spacious perspective and the timbral accuracy giving a life like presentation without oversteering any one component. Small-scale jazz has a knockout 'in the room' feel, while the power and insight the can muster for big bands or full-whack orchestral pieces belies that 'only 55W'

THIS REMOTE TOOK TWO YEARS' WORK

Building remote control into this amp wasn't a matter of just buying an off-the-shelf module - Exposure spent two years writing its own remote programming. Despite the user convenience, the XXV has no relays in the signal path (a motorised source selector is used), nor even a preamp section. Instead signals are fed directly to the power amp via an ALPS volume potentiometer. It's a truly minimalist amp, but with remote control.

Among the niceties of the programming are a switch to CD input as soon as any of the remote's CD player control functions are used. The system's also unusually responsive so that, for example, the volume can be adjusted precisely without the overshoot common in some set-ups. It also mutes the amp momentarily when inputs are changed, avoiding switching noise. It's simple, but also very elegant.

output.

This is a very superior integrated amp, made easy with remote control. But is it a betrayal of Exposure's established 'simple is best' philosophy? Not when it's done this well it isn't!