



## Exposure 5010 Pre Amplifier & Mono Power Amplifiers

Thursday, February 27, 2020  
Chris Kelly

For a small island, Great Britain has an extraordinary number of very accomplished manufacturers of excellent audio equipment. In recent years many famous brands have been taken over by foreign conglomerates, but some have remained proudly British in both their design and manufacture. One such company is Exposure, who have been proudly creating and building audio equipment in West Sussex since 1974. They have built a strong reputation for producing great sounding, no-nonsense components and have a solid and loyal user base without ever gaining the cult status of certain other well-known British brands. Recently they have teamed up with Kudos to offer active loudspeaker configurations so they are continuing to push forward, which is a very good sign.

In January I had the opportunity to welcome into my system the 5010 Pre Amplifier and a pair of matching 5010 Mono Power Amplifiers. This was the first time I had used Exposure equipment at home so I was not sure what to expect. First impressions count and as I unboxed the three units my first reaction was that the power amps are heavy, they weigh in at 14 kg each, which gives them reassuring heft. They are finished in black (titanium is also an option) and look very purposeful on the rack. The front of the aluminium case is minimalist with just a logo and an off/off button to be seen. Round the back there are two pairs of BFA style speaker sockets in case you want to bi-wire (so forget using spade or bare wire connections) and balanced and RCA inputs, with a button to select between the two as well as the usual power inlet.

The preamplifier is similarly understated, with the logo and on/off button alongside good sized rotary controls for volume and source selection. There is also a receiver for the remote control signal. On the back there are two sets of RCA pre-out sockets and one pair of XLR outputs. Connection of sources is by RCA only. There are a total of 6 inputs including a double pair for use with a tape recorder/player. One pair is marked 'Phono' but this particular unit did not have the optional phono board installed.

I hooked up my Naim NDX streamer and Gold Note PH10 phono stage using RCA cables and used XLRs to connect the preamp to the power amplifiers. My REL 305SE subwoofer was connected to the RCA pre-outs and Tellurium Q Ultra Black 2 speaker cable connected my

Harbeth P3ESRS bookshelf to the mono amplifiers, mains cables were inserted and the three units were powered up. Reassuringly, a small red LED started to glow next to the Exposure logo of each box, and on the preamplifier further LEDs show the position of the two rotary controls.

Exposure had told me that they had run the units in for a few days before sending them out so all that was required was some warm up time. To get things going I went to Tidal on the Naim NDX and selected one of their 'retro' playlists – I can't help it, my musically formative years were the 1960s and early 1970s, so this is my comfort zone. I only mention this because some readers complain that too many reviewers listen to 'old' music. In fact I listen to a broad selection of music, from different eras and genres. Good music can be found from every era and in most genres, but so can bad.



### The Listening Experience

Meanwhile, back in my Stressless chair, I was immediately aware that the guest amplification was already creating a compelling listening experience. Having intended to let everything warm up before switching to my standard test tracks and albums I decided to make a start right away. I started with a CD rip (on the Naim UnitiServe) of Bob Dylan's *Blood On The Tracks*, because A, I love the album, and B 'Tangled Up In Blue' is a great track to hear how a system resolves the sound of his voice, the acoustic guitar, drums and bass. It sounds simple on a cursory listen but the more I play it the more I hear what's going on within it. The Exposure amplifiers got it just right. My little Harbeth mini-monitors very easily reveal system problems but in this context they sounded really good right from the start. I followed up the Dylan track with Pink Floyd's epic 'Echoes' from the *Meddle* album – I was absolutely transfixed for the next 23 minutes. The light and shade, the ebb and flow of this magnificent track were presented in a full-blooded, three dimensional way which I found spellbinding.

And so it went on. I played some more classic rock from the Rolling Stones with *Let It Bleed* then slowed proceedings down with a switch to some classical choral with Mozart's *Requiem* by the Academy of Ancient Music under Christopher Hogwood on the L'Oiseau Lyre label, again ripped from CD. This is majestic stuff and the full emotional impact was almost overwhelming.

In fact on that first day I only stopped listening because Mrs Kelly returned from work at about 5.15 in the afternoon, which is a sure sign that I am engrossed in the music. With 200





watts available into an 8 ohm load, the 5010 mono amplifiers have plenty of headroom to deliver musical peaks and drove the slightly inefficient Harbeth P3ESRs effortlessly. They do run warm but on an open rack such as my Quadraspire XL they had plenty of air around them and never showed any sign of distress.

In the following days I enjoyed vinyl replay through the Exposures even more than I did streaming. They have that hard to define 'boogie factor' which allowed my Tangerine Audio/Linn Sondek LP12 to really shine. My play pile of vinyl discs rose and fell and I could not find a single record that did not sound great through this system. Rock, blues, jazz, pop and classical records all sounded good and made me want to play more. Can one ask any more of an audio system than that?

The tonal balance of this system really suited my preferences – bass was fast deep and tuneful, the midrange was exceptional and the high frequencies had all the air or sparkle (choose your own cliché here) that my ageing ears could hope for. There are of course, in keeping with the majority of British amplifiers, no tone controls, so we are reliant on the skill and judgement of the designer to get the right balance and in this the Exposure team have done a great job.

### Conclusion

Listening to, and living with, the Exposure 5010 amplifiers was an absolute pleasure. These are well made, aurally delightful units that should impress any audiophile looking for amplification at this sort of price level. He or she should make the effort to seek out and audition these units. They should give their competitors serious cause for concern. Yes they look workmanlike rather than beautiful, but I actually love that discrete look on the rack. If you like the idea of having extraordinarily musical and reliable amplification at the heart of your system, and are not one of those restless souls who always hankers after adding another power supply or upgrading to the next level, then maybe it is time to seek out Exposure. You will not be disappointed. This is classic British hi-fi at its best.

