



POWER

MENU

ENTER

EVOLUTION
202

S-1

B-1

C-1

TAP

B-2

B-3

C-2

PHASE

MUTE

EVOLUTION
202

EVOLUTION
402e

Krell

EVOLUTION 402E

The Evolution range of amplifiers evolves again, getting greener and saving power

Price £18,500 **Contact** Absolute Sounds 020 8971 3909 www.krellonline.com

For many hi-fi enthusiasts, Krell is the quintessential high-end electronics brand. Just the mention of its name conjures up images of über-heavy, expensive powerhouse amps that can drive just about any loudspeaker out there. Its Evolution 402e is the first model in a new series of enhanced power amplifiers. All remaining unenhanced models will eventually be replaced, the 'e' models mainly aimed at curbing the Krell's well-documented thirst for electrical power when on standby.

The new 'e' models physically resemble the originals, with changes limited to the internal circuits. These enhancements apply only to the power amplifiers: they aren't relevant to the preamps, which will continue unchanged. All the changes are also retrofitable. There will be a cost involved, however, which we are told will not be far out of line with the cost difference between the Evolution 402 and the 'e' version.

There are several internal changes that mostly involve the power supply, though the twin 2,200 VA mains transformers that drive the amplifier are unaltered. There has been a sharp increase in PSU reservoir capacity (from 132,000µF to 188,000µF); the Active Cascade circuits that combine the output of multiple parallel output devices (a Krell technology) have been retuned for greater reliability and precision; changes have been made to the feedback topology to improve dynamics; and enhanced internal power conditioning has been added. Finally, a new transformer now powers the digital logic circuits. In the case of the 402e, these measures mean that in its new 'green' operating mode, the 370-watt consumption in standby drops to a mere two watts – though the standard non-power saving mode remains available.

Not every aspect of the Krell 'e' models is as green as you might hope. Power drain increases to a decidedly non-eco-friendly 570 watts at idle when the amp is out of standby, and more once you're drawing real power. All else is as before. The amp is still massive – 438x248x560mm (WxHxD) – and heavy (61.1kg), rated as before at 400 watts into eight ohms (20Hz – 20kHz at 0.1 per cent THD), doubling in output with each halving of load impedance down to two ohms. The speaker terminals accept spades, and inputs are available in single-ended (phono) and balanced (XLR) flavours, as well as Krell's proprietary CAST interface. When used in a completely CAST-based system, this interface reduces the number of voltage gain stages to the minimum possible – one. For this test, the Evolution 402e was used with the two-box Krell 202 preamplifier, pictured.

The original Evolution 402 was available for audition at the importer's premises when reviewing the Wilson Sasha (see p48). The new version of the amplifier, and the preamplifier, were reviewed at the author's premises with speakers from Triangle (two models), Amphion and Martin Logan, but not Wilson. It was not possible to get the two amplifiers under one roof at the same time, so there is no way to be definitive about how they compare. Krell's own view is that having started the 'e' product with the limited aim of making a greener product, it became apparent that they could make significant progress in other areas, too, and that

the 'e's should be a significant all-round improvement. And that's how it seems to be. We will admit to being fans of the Evolution and we cannot confirm a comprehensive improvement for the reasons already given. The warm-up period from a powered start in standby is now a little slower, but it doesn't take long to get into its stride, and when it does so it sounds... just like a big Krell.

SOUND QUALITY

The Evolution 402e is devastatingly powerful and authoritative, and there is absolutely no detectable change in voicing at different volume levels. Timing and precision has

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always been a Krell strength, and the Evolution series is also notable for its subtlety and grace. There is a hint of leanness and sharpness to them, as there always has been, and it seems that this too has been improved, with a little more finesse and polish than we remember. The bass had the same reach, and similarly propulsive timing, but there also appears to be a touch more of a tactile quality.

One of the main reasons for buying Krell is that it will take charge of loads that other amplifiers would balk at. The Wilson Sasha is, perhaps, a case in point: it is a challenging load that you wouldn't want to couple to a valve amplifier, for example. Here we can only report that the match to the older series Evolution 402 was completely seamless and utterly convincing. The hardest load we had available was the Amphion Krypton 2, which is quite sensitive to the way it is driven, but again this low-sensitivity speaker was shrugged off by this Krell. ■

Alvin Gold

