



A SYNDICATED REVIEW FROM GERMANY

This review first appeared in the June 2013 issue of hi-end hifi magazine fairaudio.de of Germany. You can also read this review of Krell's Evolution 2250e in its original German version. We publish its English translation in a mutual syndication arrangement with the publishers. As is customary for our own reviews, the writer's signature at review's end shows an e-mail address should you have questions or wish to send feedback. All images contained in this review are the property of fairaudio or Krell - Ed.

Reviewer: Jörg Dames

Sources: Laptop with foobar2000 and J.River MC with Phonosophie DAC1, Fone! Simplicité

Amplification: Fone! Emotion, Abacus Ampino, Funk MTX Monitor V3b, Audionet AMP monos

Loudspeakers: Thiel CS 3.7, Spondor SP 100 R2

Cables: Straight Wire Virtuoso, HMS Fortissimo, Reson LSC 350

Power: Quantum-Powerchords, Hifi-Tuning Powercord Gold, MF-Electronic power bar

USB: Wireworld Starlight

Rack: Lovan Classic II

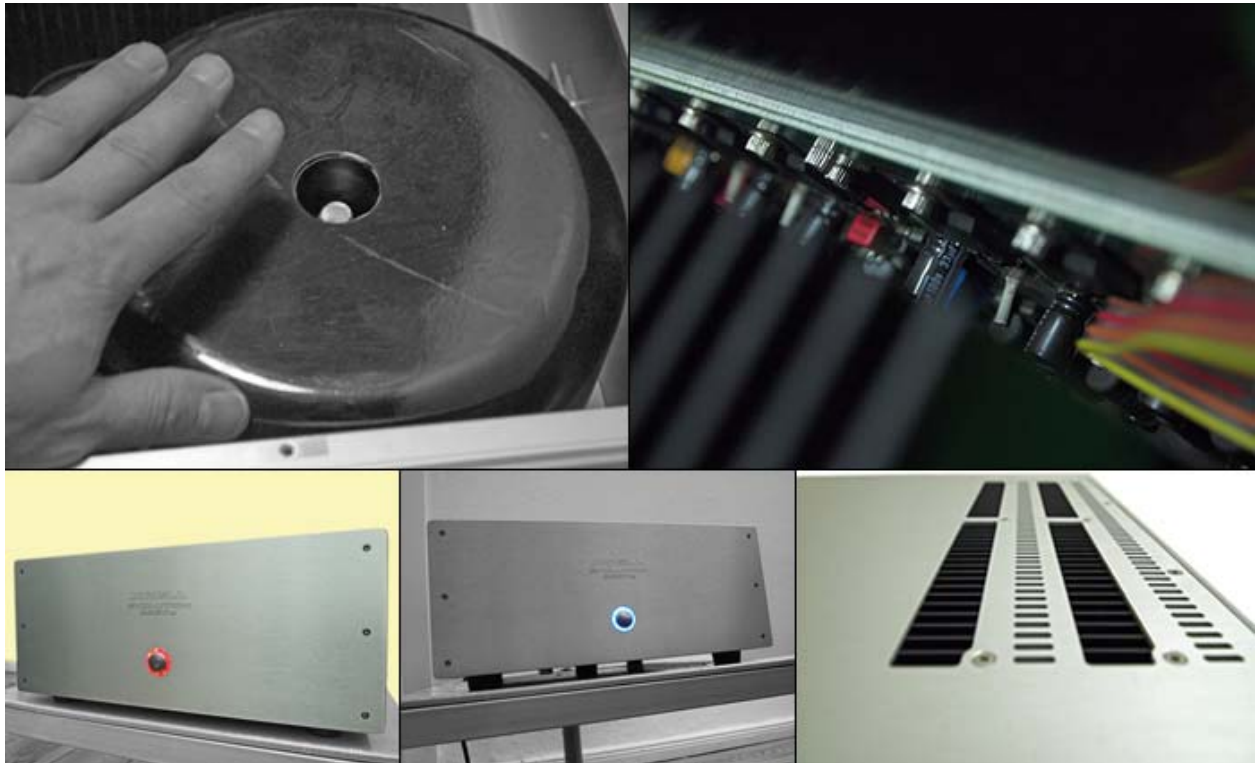
Review component retail in Europe: €8.500

More than 30 years have passed since Dan and Rondi D'Agostino launched a massive class A power amp called KSA 100 with studio-gear handles and with it the Krell brand which over the decades following left a deep mark on hifi history. Much happened since. Dan and Rondi got divorced (more newsworthy to *The Sun* than us) and after involvement of an investor group, Dan D'Agostino left Krell to lend his name to a new brand devoted solely to amplification. Towards the end of the 80s Krell had begun with D/A converters and the present portfolio even has streamers, iDocks and loudspeakers. Yet if my overview of current Krell amps on the German importer's



website is any indication, handles are no longer with us.

Which isn't to say they wouldn't come in handy. Powerful heavyweight transistor muscle amps remain a specialty of this Orange/Connecticut-based once legendary brand. For review we picked the smallest most 'portable' current stereo model. With the Evolution 2250e's fighting weight of 35kg which is how one enters the world of Krell power today, all that's relative of course.



Visually too the amp looks decidedly grown up and – well, *professional*. The first impression relates directly to the 42.8 x 19.3 x 48.6cm WxHxD dimensions for proper size. The second ties to a no-frills near laboratory industrial design sans flourishes or manly heat sinks. A slightly wavy profile on the cheeks suffices. Upon close inspection of the fit'n'finish one is back to professional. Immaculate surfaces and tight seams elude criticism. Whilst socketry looks nothing spectacular, it's perfectly solid in use. Four switches respond with confidence-inspiring action – two small toggles select between XLR/RCA inputs, another one in the back switches between off and standby. The big frontal button then awakes the amp from sleep mode.

This is accompanied by blue, green and red light accents – not to have each family member select their favorite color for music listening but to indicate operational status. Which begs the question as to why distinguishing between 'standby' and 'on' requires more than two colors. It's because the Krell has *two* types of standby. One is a 2W-consumption eco mode intuitively indicated by green, the other a ca. 40-watt warm-up mode which keeps core circuitry active as confirmed by a red light pipe.

Switching the latter to blue=listen eliminates lengthy warm-up worries before the amp operates at full potential. That said the Krell sounded perfectly passable out of cold green. The now slightly louder turn-on transient—here the circuitry gets hit with higher more sudden inrush current—is no cause for alarm though any such 'plop' is always somewhat inelegant. Be that as it may, my audition predominantly hovered between green and blue. Before I forget, selection of the stand-by modes occurs by depressing the frontal switch *whilst* the rearward mains is toggled.

To wrap up externals, official stock photos across the web show the heatsinks completely covered by the lid or tucked beneath silver vents. Our loaner showed them open to create a sort of striped look on top. The reason for this discrepancy is simply that the stock photos ran prototypes with still smaller heatsinks.

The appearance of our loaner reflects formal final production. On inner values—250wpc into 8Ω, 136.000uF capacity, 2.500VA transformer—Krell boast of 'advanced high-speed output devices'. The plain fact here is that with the Evolution Series Krell began using resin-enclosed Sanken transistors said to exhibit higher bandwidth and lower distortion than their former metal-encapsulated Motorola parts.



Similar goals are pursued with Krell's 'unique current mode circuitry' which routes the internal signal between amplification stages in the current domain. Unlike voltage mode this allows for lower-impedance circuits of concomitantly broader bandwidth. In mixed form this concept isn't unusual but Krell claims much proprietary development for their solution.

I looked forward to this audition since the 2250e would be my first Krell. Aside from show encounters, I'd never had any up-close experience. Well, when four years ago colleague Martin did the honors on Krell's [S300i](http://www.6moons.com/audioreviews/krell4/krell.html) (http://www.6moons.com/audioreviews/krell4/krell.html) integrated (oh my does time fly), I of course couldn't resist to lend a quick informal ear. That review concluded with "generally the Krell S300i is more for pleasure seekers than furry-brow analysts", something I could relate to for the firm's then smallest model which exhibited a very unambiguous sonic profile. The same distinctiveness of sound was true for the 2250e though it pursues a clearly different direction.

Letting our tester speak for itself now, we'll first focus on its response south of the border. That a 35kg 250wpc behemoth wasn't going to fold in on matters of control and bass power was expected yet still I would be up for surprises. A good LF test is "Atlas" from New York's Math-Rock trio The Battles [*Mirrored*] where drummer John Stanier kicks off with fat toms before abusing the bass drum with heavy quarter grooves.

On whipper-snap dynamics of the toms, the Krell went eye to eye with my arrow-quick Audionet monos which in my book crossed off the first must-have category of this assignment. On substance and displacement the Krell actually bested my Audionets which go a bit lighter on mass and infrasonic power.

This tick-off thus got an exclamation mark from me. Clearly energy problems of running dry weren't in the Krell's vocabulary. At all. When it came time to harness the full potential of my Thiel's CS3.7 woofers, the German monos by contrast seemed to actually get a bit winded. And the Krell even was superior at fully differentiating this heaving and teeming low-bass dimension. Hat off.



To nip miscalculations in the butt, tonally the Krell tracked my Audionets by playing it unassailably neutral. Whilst the 2250e can unleash hell with full fury when the music demands it, it's neither fat nor warm. The low bass was ideally precise, neutral and haute-cuisine correct. A very good start. Tonal neutrality extended to the midband and highs. Neither romantically flavored, warm or softened nor lean and overtly fresh, the American's motto seemed to be *noticeably unnoticeable*. That these registers still weren't common was due to other qualities.



For these I had Canadian multi-instrumentalist's Cevin Key's *Music for Cats* with its gloomily atmospheric yet detail-intense "Beauty is the enemy". Right from the go and thus prior even to the vocals kicking in I noticed how precise and spacious the 2250e rendered the sonic mosaic which here is made up of tiny rhythmically cycling snippets and effects shards whilst suggesting very tangible generous space. High resolving power, stupendous micro dynamics, blackground calm and brilliant image focus were clear highlights and to such an extent that an A/B against my Audionets raised eyebrows. The otherwise very sorted and accurate monos from Bochum seemed a tad diffuse and foggy by contrast. The myriad microscopic sonic plankton bits were less fixed and not as energetically direct and as such not as contrasted in virtual space.

And that was news. I've had a score of amps through which were all over the map on price yet only the Hegel H4SE had pre-echoed similar qualities. Here a direct A/B would have been interesting but in the

Hegel's absence I won't lean out the window further with any specific comparative comments. Extraordinarily controlled in the bass, dynamic to a fare-thee-well, transparently precise into the very tips of its hair and tonally neutral... these were all impressive hard skills but one must still pay attention to proper speaker matching.

Time now for less tangible 'soft' skills of the American. As what we've covered already presaged, the 2250e isn't trained to inject into the musical action a particularly fluid meandering note. My own Audionets but also amps like the recently reviewed AURALiC Merak—in matters of bass, dynamics and resolving power not the Krell's equal—apply less concentration on the ultimate teasing out of detail but in trade might seem a tad more 'connected' and flowing, i.e. less rigorously profiled. With its ultra differentiation the Krell more elaborates the singularity of individual musical events.

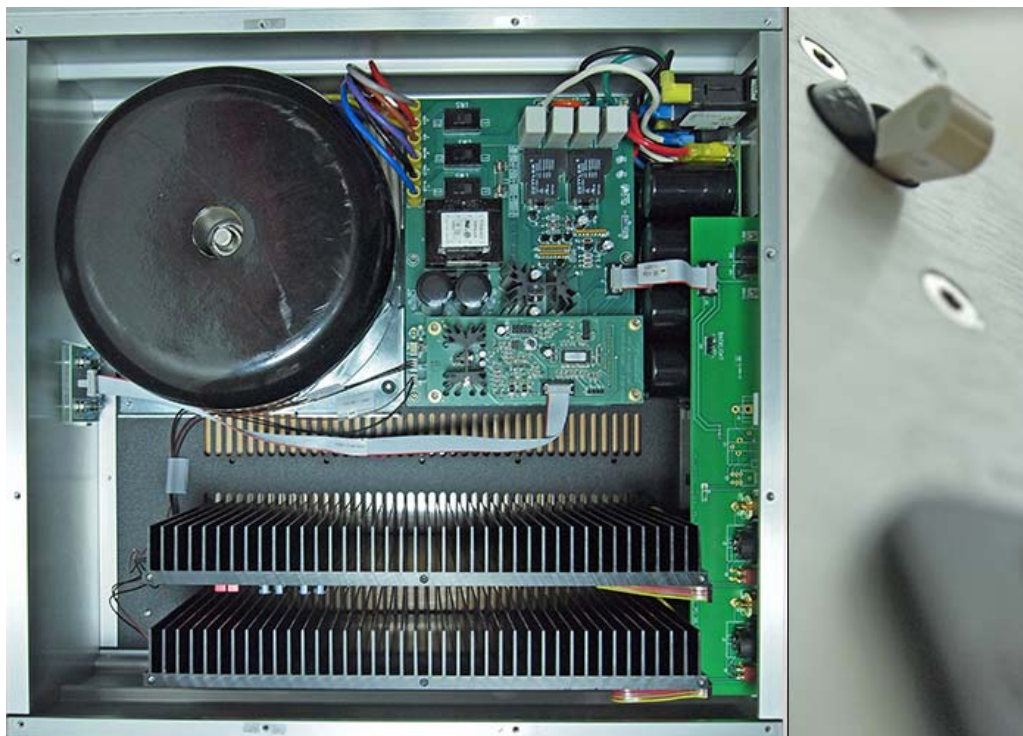


Before this gets too abstract, check out the acoustic guitar on "If that's how it's gotta be" from J. Mascis + the Fog's Rock project *More Light*. With the Krell that gets more crystallized and edgy down to clear micro nuances on the ring-out of each metal string. Ditto for the decidedly not softly recorded sibilants in Beirut's young frontman Zach Condon's delivery of the



melodiously waltzing "Sunday Smile" from *The Flying Cup*. The Krell accentuated these sibilants more strongly than my usual amps but also had the highest treble resolution.

It's intuitive then to reach for calmer speakers which go heavier on flow and silk. I'm quite sure that the Evolution 2250e would have gotten on famously with my earlier Sehring S703SE whilst tapping them for all their worth on dynamics, bass authority and tweeter definition beyond the Audionets. With my less silken more analytical Thiel CS3.7, the 2250e made for more of a like-meets-like proposition which depending on taste and material could get a bit excessive at times..



This Krell amp was one of the most formally 'correct' power amps I've yet met as though it had emerged straight from a page of the textbook on amplifier design. The sober cosmetics already hinted at a penchant for just the facts to suggest serious rather than playful hifi. And the sonics indeed followed suit with bass chops amongst the very best I've heard and special talents with dynamics, control and resolution I'd call of benchmark quality. For listeners who laconically view fans of micro-power SETs as soft eggs, Krell's power house is without question a *Best Buy* in the €10.000 class. The same goes for listeners whose current speakers seem a bit restrained, lush, diffuse and dynamically coasting. Logically those very same attributes won't suit the taming of already spiky, analytical and muscular transducers in need of a special musical flair. There the sharp-cornered Yank won't compensate.

Psych profile. The Krell Evolution 2250e offers

- Stupendous bass with killer pressure, reach and definition beyond any shadow of a doubt.
- Ultra-precise treble without artificial edge but zero mildness, cream or diffusion either.
- A perfectly even transparent midband.
- Impressive speed and energy on both micro and macrodynamics.
- Tonally dead-on neutrality neither warm nor bright.
- Markedly grippy detail focus rather than 'connected' flow.
- For the price well above average image focus and complete soundstage freedom from the speakers.
- Plain vanilla looks but flawless build quality.

Facts:

- Concept: Stereo amp
- Dimensions and weight: 43.8 x 19.3 x 48.6cm WxHxD, 35kg
- Output power: 2 x 250W/8Ω, 2 x 500W/4Ω
- Power consumption: 90 watts at idle, 40 watts in warm-up standby, 2 watts in eco-mode standby
- I/o: 1 x RCA, 1 x XLR, 1 pair of speaker terminals
- Warranty: 5 years with registration, otherwise 2 years

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