



INTEGRATED

WINNER: MUSICAL FIDELITY AMS35i

Contrary to the proclamations of legions of hi-fi designers around the world, it's not easy to make high end hi-fi. They argue of course that cost-no-object designs let you put in all the best components and do circuits as they should be done, with ifs or buts. Yet when all is said and done, if your high end hi-fi product is anything less than perfect, it simply has no excuse for its continued existence, end of. The failings of a £600 amplifier can be logically explained and excused, but add a zero to that and the thing's got to pretty close to hi-fi heaven to be worth so much as a mention...

Not an easy life then, for Musical Fidelity's AMS35i. At £6,000 it's at a curious price point; most will simply expect that hi-fi cannot

get any better at this price, and are mortified to find that it can, providing you spend a bit more still. Yet it's still head and shoulders above most people's conception of their 'dream' integrated amplifier, such is its useable power, expansive soundstaging, wonderful 'hear through' clarity and fine filigree detail. It's the great, innate across the board strength of the AMS35i that makes it this year's World Award winner for integrateds. In solid-state terms, there are better amps, but you have to spend a lot more to hear them...

It's not as compact as some; at 483x148x475mm and 28.3kg you'll need a larger hi-fi rack than normal, and you'll also need a commitment to the idea of running hi-fi as a household expense. The power consumption of the full Class A AMS35i is obviously more than

most transistor power amplifiers; it's enough to make some people's houses' lights dim on switch on. Indeed, in this respect it's similar to a big valve amp. Despite being full Class A, it doesn't sound like one, however. Yet nor does it sound like a conventional Class AB solid-stater. The Musical Fidelity AMS35i treads a skilful path between to the two, offering a good deal of the speed and liquidity of tubes with the insight and grip of a top transistor design. It's an infectious and at times totally arresting combination, and marks this machine out as having a most endearing character all of its own. Simply put, once you've heard one of these, it's hard to justify spending more.

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