

Johnson's Classic 60SE stereo amp. I had more power on tap.

John Quick, of Tempo Sales and Marketing, US importer of Musical Fidelity as well as Penaudio, supplied a Musical Fidelity M6PRX stereo amplifier, claimed to output 260Wpc into 8 ohms. With this gem of an amp, I found I could play the Cenyas very loudly without strain or dynamic compression. The sound belied their size. Preamps included my newfound (rescued from Hurricane Irene) Musical Fidelity X-PRE with X-PSU power supply, and Music First Audio's Classic Magnetic V2 preamplifier (coming up in a minute).

The Cenya's shape—narrow, deep, ported in the rear—had something to do with its sound. The outputs of the two drivers integrated superbly, even when I listened in the nearfield. The big story was the soundstage—wide, deep, and expansive (if expensive), with pinpoint imaging. I thought the tonal balance was well suited to classical and jazz. I also thought that the speakers were especially kind to older classical recordings transferred to CD.

The Cenya avoided the hot, hyperdetailed, overanalytical sound favored by many audiophiles. It was refreshingly cool, like a dip in a Finnish lake after the sauna. (I've done something similar in Russia, which borders Finland.) The Cenyas were also surprisingly kind to run-of-the-mill recordings. I took pleasure playing CDs of George Szell and the Cleveland Orchestra, for instance—particularly of Mozart's Symphonies 35, 40, and 41 (Sony Essential Classics SBK 46333).

The other day, on Internet radio, I heard a stunning performance, in mono, of Chopin's Nocturne in E-flat, Op.9 No.2, by Rudolf Firkusny (CD, EMI Classics CDM 7243 5, out of print but readily available used). WQXR's announcer, Jeff Spurgeon, made a big deal of Firkusny's tone, the sheer beauty of his playing. (Because of Spurgeon, I become a splurgeon.) After I "won" the disc on eBay, I really heard Firkusny play in my listening room.

Do you really need stereo? It can be a distraction, as several speaker designers have told me (Sami not among them). But whether or not stereo distracts, a great monophonic recording can create its own soundstaging wonder through the right speakers. Especially with solo piano.

By all means, seek out the Penaudio Cenya for a demo. And the Musical



Musical Fidelity's M6PRX power amplifier costs \$3495.

Fidelity M6PRX (see next). Chances are, you'll find them at the same dealer.

Musical Fidelity M6PRX power amplifier

This will be a Quick write-up, John.

Musical Fidelity's M6PRX dual-mono power amplifier retails for \$3495. It's rated to deliver 260Wpc into 8 ohms from four pairs of bipolar output transistors per channel, through circuitry said to be based on Musical Fidelity's flagship Titan amplifier. The M6 is class-A/B; it ran warm after warm-up, but not excessively so. Our cat, Maksim, loves it. It's just warm enough to nap on.

Why hasn't *Stereophile* reviewed it before now? The crush of the Titan, I suppose. The M6PRX is far more modest. (Like me.) I think it got things just right: more than enough power for most applications, right price, right size: 17.5" (440mm) W by 5" (125mm) H by 15.5" (390mm) D. The amplifier has balanced XLR as well as single-ended RCA inputs, but it is not, apparently, fully balanced from inputs to outputs. Fit and finish are fine, but it's not hi-fi jewelry. It looks rather plain. You have a choice of silver or black faceplate.

The M6PRX's matching preamp is the M6PRE. Musical Fidelity's tubed X-PRE and X-PSU units, more than a dozen years old now, served me well. (I never used them in the years they were buried in my dehumidified basement.) I also got good results with Music First Audio's Classic Magnetic Preamplifier V2—the one that isn't Mk.II (see below).

The M6PRX offers dual-mono, choke-regulated power supplies. Essentially, a choke is an inductor or

coil. It looks like a transformer and can have the same, er, transformative effect. A choke, one for each channel, serves to reduce power-line noise coming into and going out of the amplifier. Musical Fidelity says they've been using choke-regulated power supplies since 1987. True, but in only some of their products. Like the M6PRX.

Whatever the reasons, this is one of the sweetest-sounding, most fatigue-free solid-state amplifiers I have met up with. But since the M6PRX has been available for some two years now, you might want to audition it [ahem] Quickly.

That's the short and the sweet of it.

Music First Audio Classic Magnetic Preamplifier V2

The Music First Audio Classic Magnetic Preamplifier V2 is completely green. You don't plug it in, because it consumes no electricity. While a switch might eventually wear out, there's little else that can. There is virtually nothing to deteriorate, except you and the rest of your system.

The Classic Magnetic Mk.I appeared in 2003, and I caught up with it for my January 2006 column (Vol.29 No.1). It looked pricey then for \$2500. The V2 is pricier still: \$4185. At the moment, Music First has one US dealer: High Value AV, a store in Santa Cruz, California, owned by Michael Gliksmann. If you visit his website, click on his bio—a healthy reminder that there should be more to life than hi-fi.

Music First Audio is a division of Stevens and Billington Limited, a family-owned manufacturer of audio transformers in St. Leonard's on Sea, East Sussex, England. I've been in