

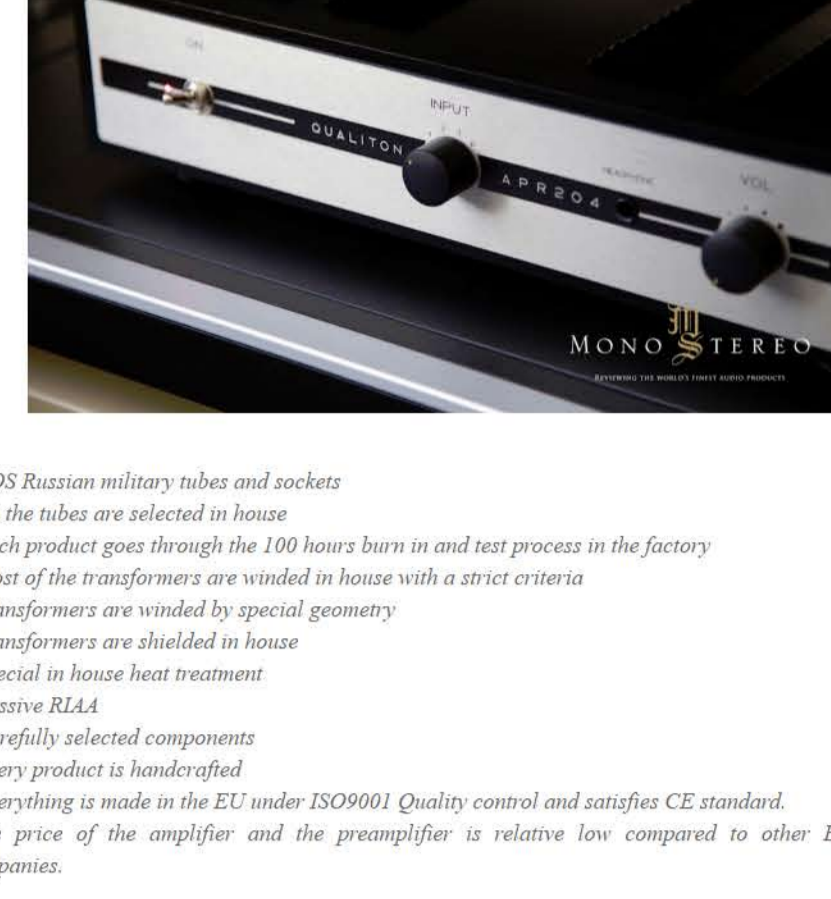
AUDIO HUNGARY QUALITON APX 200 AND APR 204 REVIEW



It's always refreshing to evaluate something new, that you cannot really pin down into the usual labeling and Audio Hungary certainly doesn't fit under the usual high-end audio labeling.

What's Audio Hungary might appear as a new corner, it's actually a brand with the deeper audio DNA. They've bought the company called UNVOX, which was manufacturer of the some PA systems and changed the "pro" profile to high-end audio. They've also acquired the talented workers from the old company, with the great experiences in manufacturing amplifiers, speakers etc. In this way they man power and know how needed for the production was there from the very start of the new venture. They didn't have to go through the process, that many high-end audio struggle with - the finding of the skilled people, that are ready to produce and design product right away.

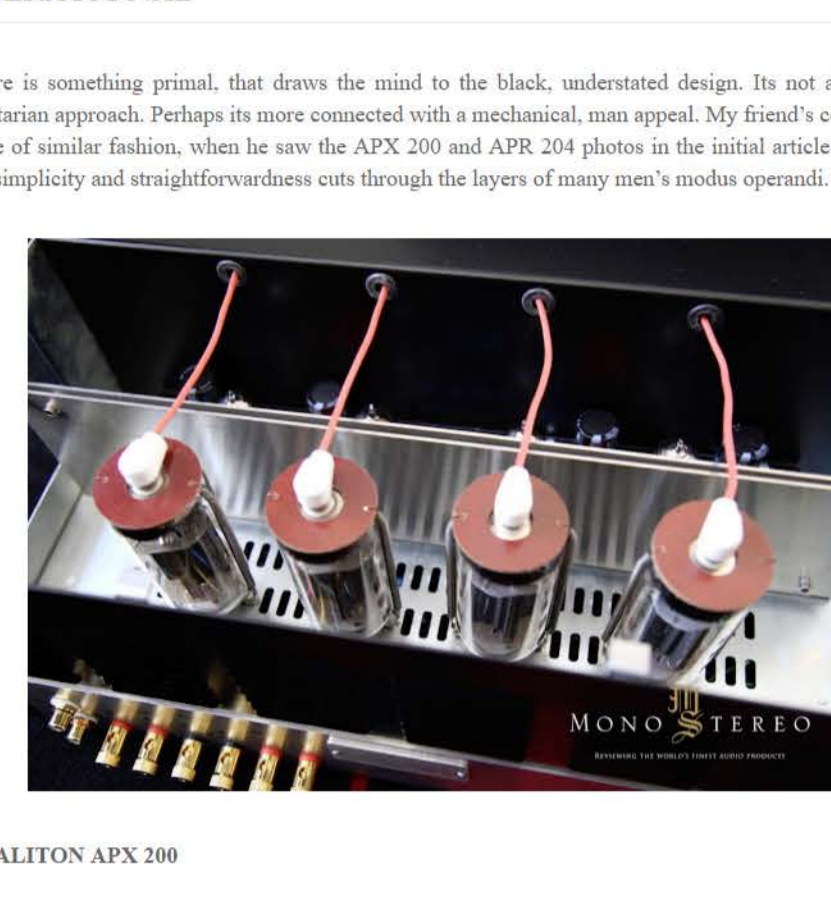
After some serious capital investment into the company Audio Hungary renewed the factory and bought many new machines for processing steel (bending, cutting, punching, grinding). The other important investment was the purchase of laser-cutting machines, that helped in cutting down the the developing time for the new products.



Even more importantly, Audio Hungary have a refreshingly young engineers team, approximately 30 years old.

MEET THE QUALITON APX 200 AND APR 204

Audio Hungary Qualiton APX 200 power amplifier introduction followed their market research, that has shown, how there's no great variety of similar amplifiers available. APX 200 was inspired by the old BEAO APX 100 amplifier, that was made in eastern block in the 1970's and many of them still operate today.

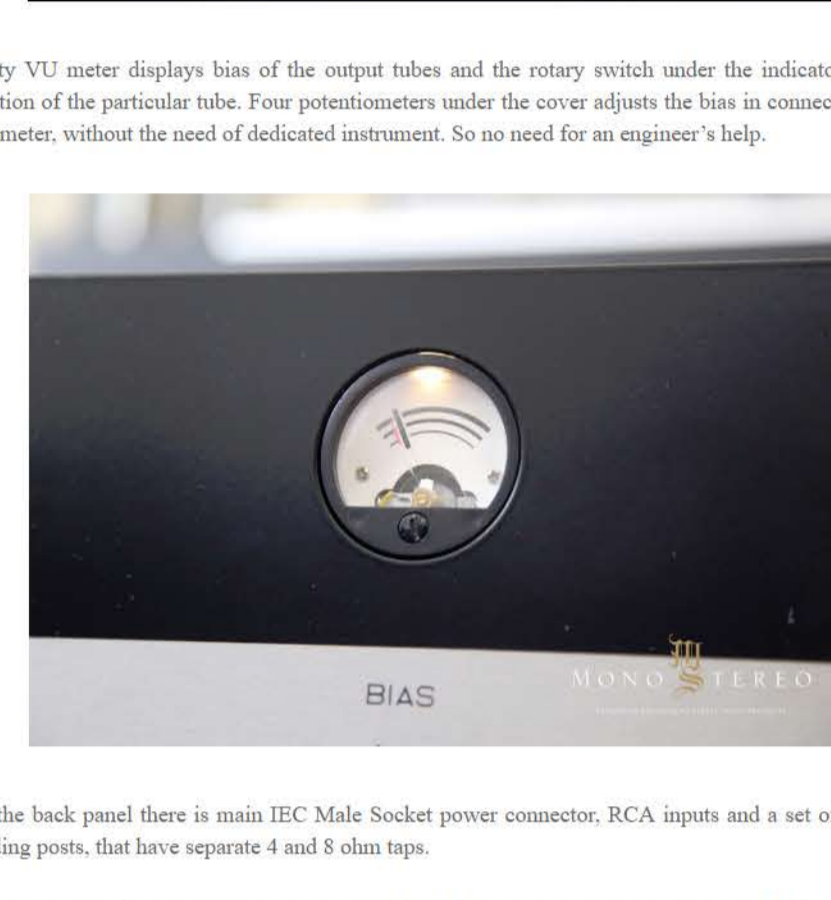


Few of the APX 200 highlights

- Four output tubes can make in 150 wattpeak.
- APX 200 can drive loudspeakers with very low impedance.
- The low frequencies are independent of the frequency response in 13 Hz; the upper cutoff frequency is 100 kHz; (-3 dB points).
- power tubes 6P45S are equivalent with EL519.

I've asked Andras Fehér (Audio-Hungary Business development manager and CEO) to describe and break-down what sets their brand apart, particularly APX 200 AND APR 204 apart from the competition:

- NOS Russian military tubes and sockets
- All the tubes are selected in house
- Each product goes through the 100 hours burn in and test process in the factory
- Most of the transformers are winded in house with a nice criteria
- Transformers are shielded in house
- Special in house heat treatment
- Passive RLCs
- Cables for selected components
- Every product is handcrafted
- Everything is made in the EU under ISO9001 Quality control and satisfies CE standard.
- The pricing of the amplifier and the preamplifier is relative low compared to other European companies.



All in all there was more than enough reasons to explore both of the APX 200 AND APR 204 with an open mind (and ears).

OPERATIONAL

There is something primal, that draws the mind to the black, understated design. It's not about the utilitarian approach. Perhaps its more connected with a mechanical, mass appeal. My friend's comments were of similar fashion, when he saw the APX 200 and APR 204 photos in the initial article. I guess, the simplicity and straightforwardness cuts through the layers of many man's modes operadi.



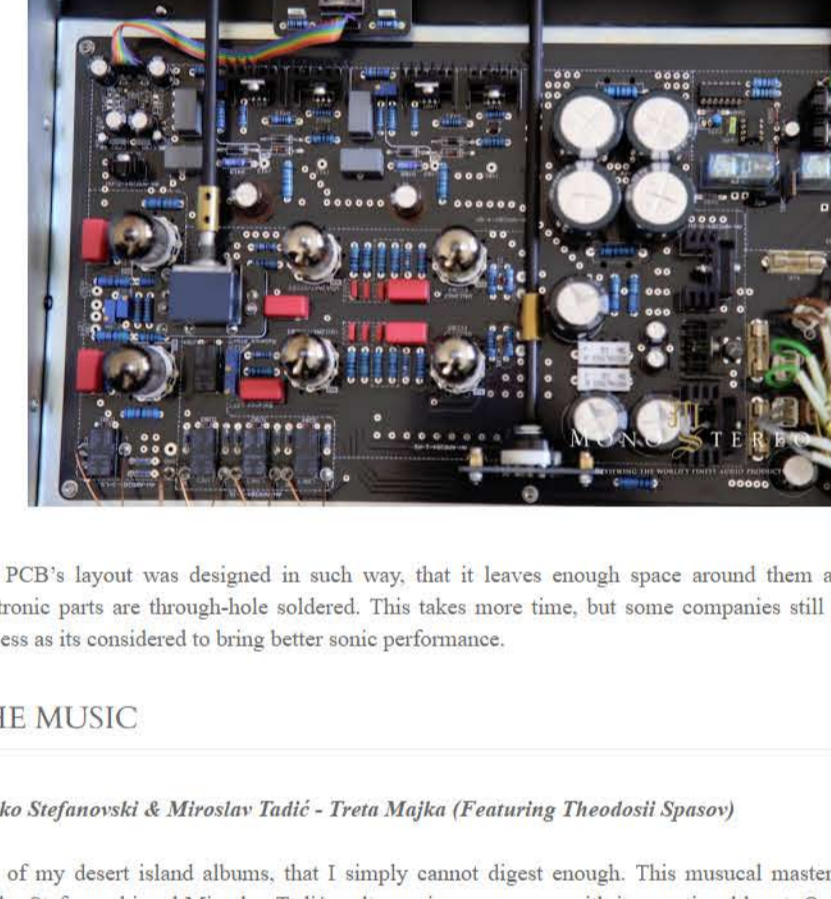
On the back panel there is main IEC Male Socket power connector, RCA inputs and a set of speaker binding posts, that have separate 4 and 8 ohm taps.

QUALITON APX 200

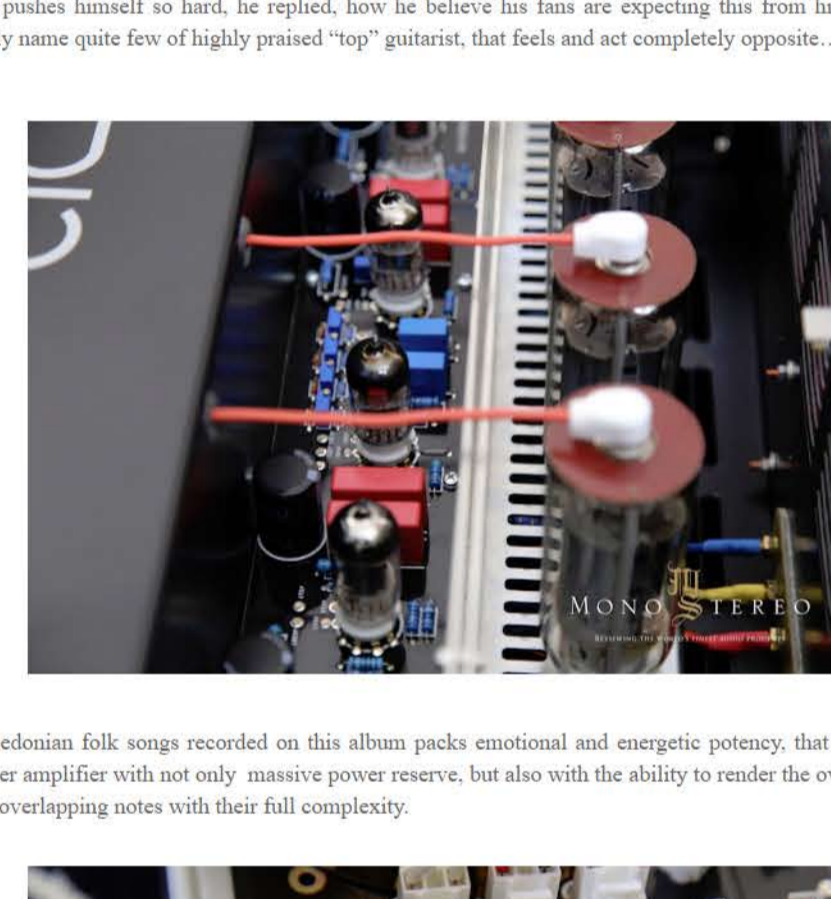
APX 200 power amplifier controls and connections are straightforward and no brainer to operate. On the front panel there are: main on/off switch, input gain knob and bias control knob.



The gain knob comes handy as you can match the level of the incoming gain from the preamplifier. We still don't have a unified gain value in our niche industry and this will help finding a proper balance and open up the doors to most of the preamps other.

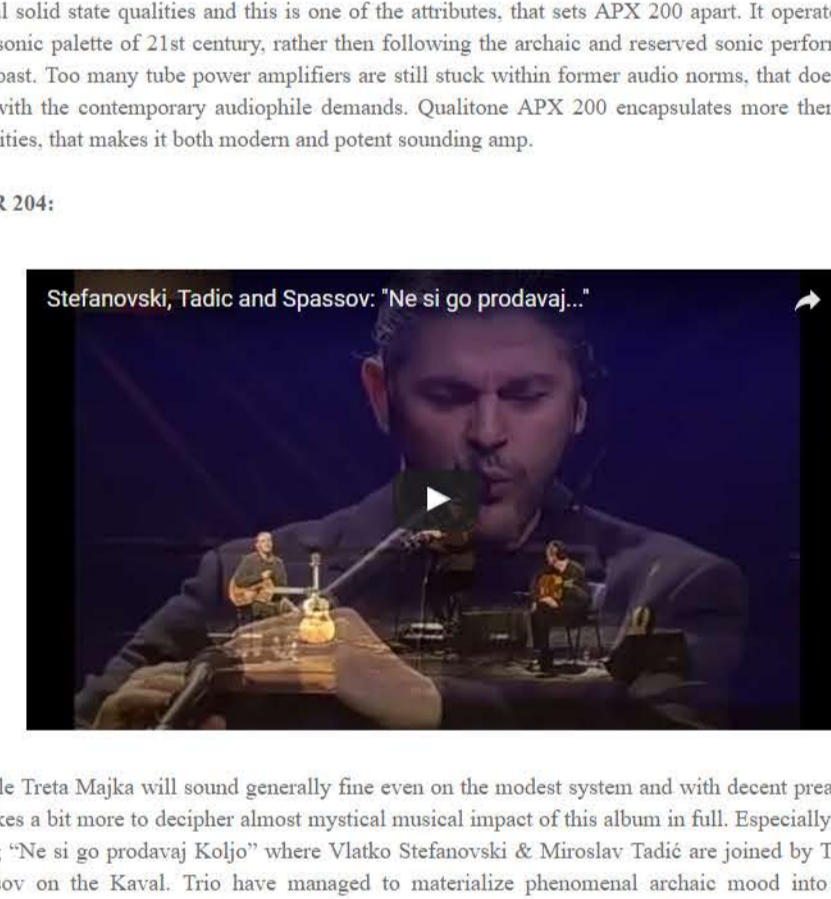


Neatly VU meter displays bias of the output tubes and the rotary switch under the indicator set the position of the particular tube. Four potentiometers under the cover adjust the bias in connection with VU meter, without the need of dedicated instrument. So no need for an engineer's help.



On the back panel there is main IEC Male Socket power connector, RCA inputs and a set of speaker binding posts, that have separate 4 and 8 ohm taps.

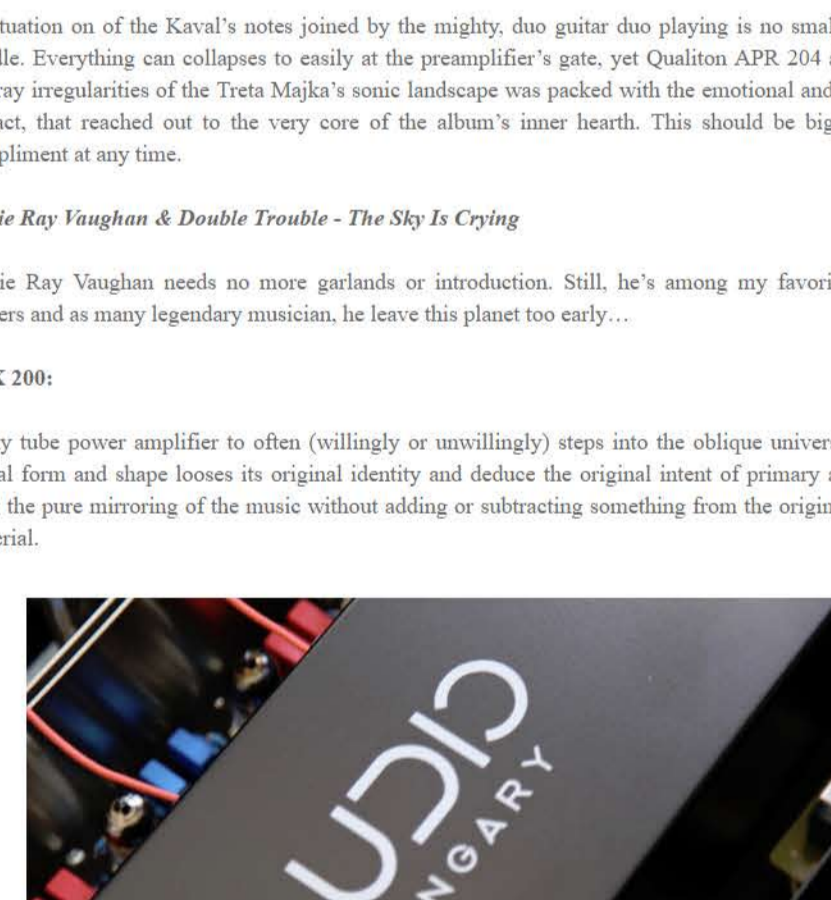
Massive bent steel chassis have enough cut holes for the heat to dispath, but do mind that APX 200 will get hot.



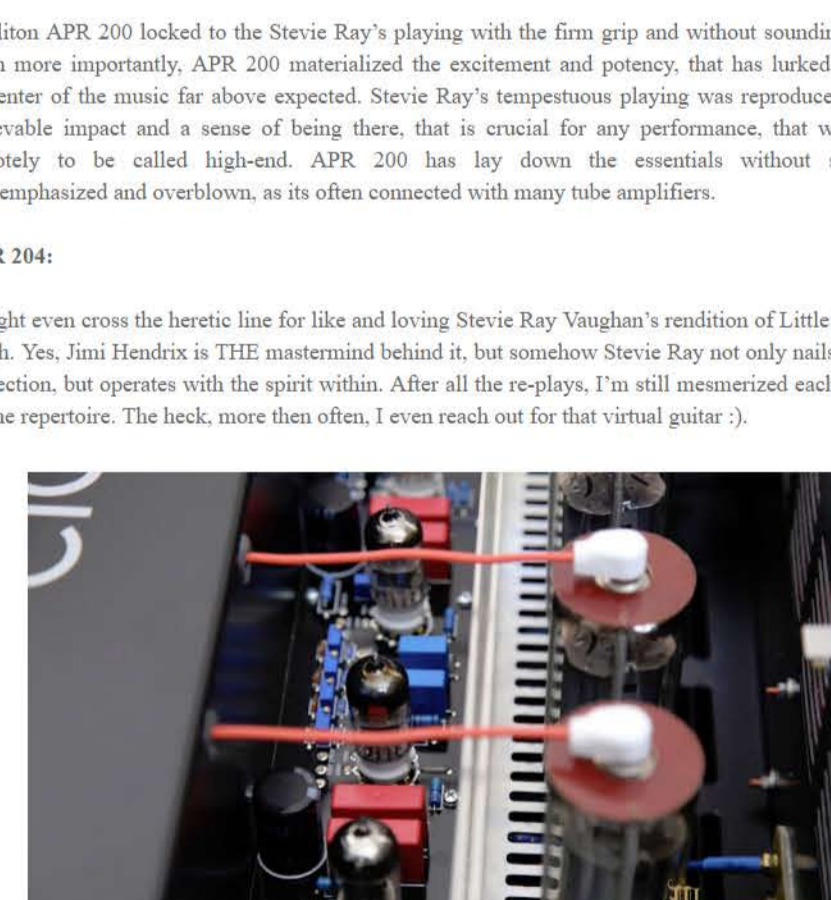
Qualiton APX 200 is a massive and hefty amplifier and I wouldn't recommend moving it alone. Lesson learned :)

QUALITON APR 204

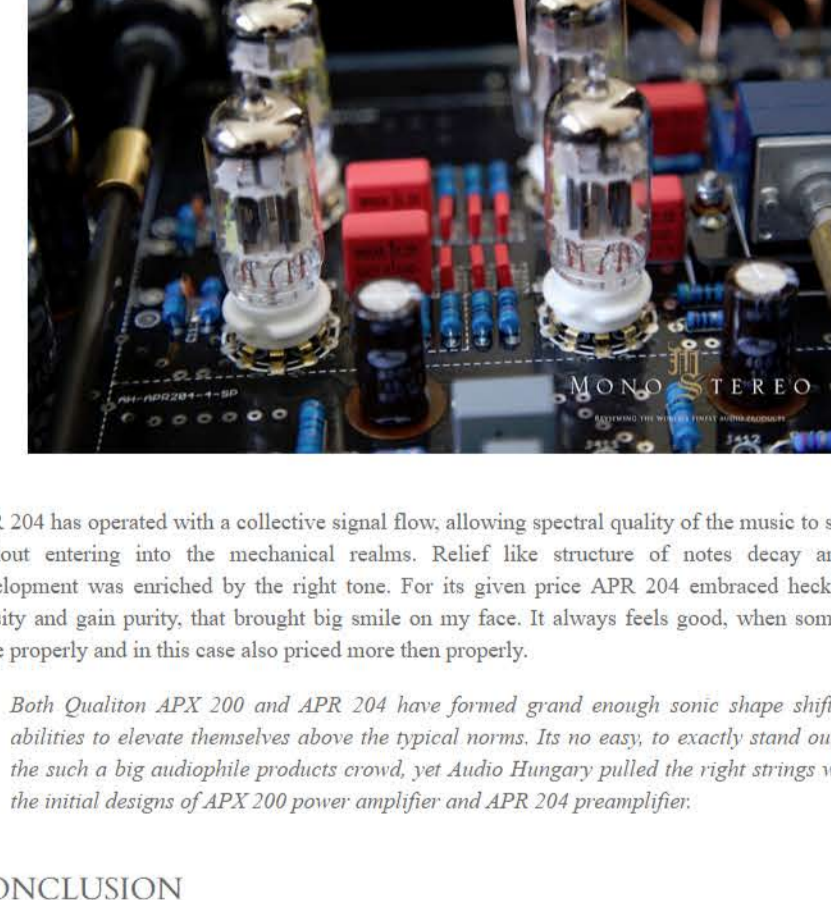
Before I write anything, let me share some remarks. This preamplifier comes packed with lots of features for under the 1500 EUR. And yes, its actually made in Europe. I'll reflect on the value at the end of the review, but APR 204 include line level preamplifier, headphone preamp and MN phono module!



On the front panel, left corner is reserved for the main power on/off switch, the middle position host the input selector and on the right corner resides volume knob.



Back panel simple layout shares the RCA line outputs on the far right, followed by three line inputs. Middle space is reserved for the phono input with ground connector, and full for IEC Male Socket power connector.



As with APX 200, everything is laid down with no hassle to operate. Simple and straightforward.



Both APX 200 power amplifier and APR 204 preamplifier innards were designed with enough space around the tubes for proper heat dissipation and all the electronic parts and transformers are logically positioned.



The PCB's layout was designed in such way, that it leaves enough space around them as all the electronic parts are through-hole technology. This takes more time, but some companies still do this process as its considered to bring better sonic performance.

THE MUSIC

Vlasto Stefanovski & Miroslav Tadić - Trieta Mjaka (Featuring Theodoros Spasos)

One of my desert island albums, that I simply cannot digest enough. This musical masterpiece by Vlasto Stefanovski and Miroslav Tadić melts my inner compass with its emotional burst. On top of it greatly recorded sound really shows how well my high end audio system can perform. I know album by heart and this let me draw the conclusions more easily and objectively.

APX 200:

In order to make Trieta Mjaka resonate in its fullest, the massive amount of raw, unaltered power is needed.

Vlasto Stefanovski was long time ago highlighted as one of the best balkanian and European guitarists and one can only appreciate him for his tireless and lyrical playing. I have even bigger respect for him, as after all the years, he's still practices around eight to ten hours per day! When he was asked why he still pushes himself so hard, he replied, how he believe his fans are expecting this from him. I can easily name quite few of highly praised "top" guitarist, that feels and act completely opposite...

Macedonian folk songs recorded on this album packs emotional and energetic potency, that calls for power amplifying with not only massive power reserve, but also with the ability to render the overlaying and overlapping notes with their full complexivity.

Qualiton APX 200 allowed the guitar notes to become forte, rather then reserved and managed to breathe them with the captivating gravitas. The sense of speed and power remained one more of the usual solid state qualities and this is one of the attributes, that sets APX 200 apart. It operates within the sonic palette of 21st century, rather then following the acoustic and reserved sonic performance of the past. Too many tube power amplifiers are still stuck within former audio norms, that doesn't hold up with the contemporary music demands. Qualiton APX 200 empowers more then enough quality, that makes it both modern and potent sounding amp.

APR 204:

While Trieta Mjaka will sound generally fine even on the modest system and with decent preamplifier, it takes a bit more to decipher almost mystical musical impact of this album in full. Especially with the song "Ne si go prodavaj Koljo" where Vlasto Stefanovski & Miroslav Tadić are joined by Theodoros Spasos on the Kavali. Trio have managed to masterfully phenomenal acoustic mood into this old Macedonian folk song and their interplay resonates with the same emotionally-charged DNA.

Kavali really needs the air to become lifelike and this represent quite a challenge for any preamp.

Preamplifier still represent the heart of the matter of the high-end audio system, no matter how optimistic some audiophiles are in their quest of making it obsolete in the signal path. APR 204 has proven itself as a potent performer with the musical embodiment, that was both refreshing and inspiring.

Function on one of the Kavali's notes joined by the mighty duo guitar duo playing is no small task to smooth. Everything one calls for to easily at the preamplifier's gate, yet Qualiton APR 204 ability to portray irregularities of the Trieta Mjaka's sonic landscape was packed with the emotional and musical impact, that reached out to the very core of the album's inner heart. This should be big enough compliment at any time.

Stevie Ray Vaughan & Double Trouble - The Sky Is Crying

Stevie Ray Vaughan needs no more garlands or introduction. Still, he's among my favorite guitar players and as many legendary musician, he leave this planet too early...

APX 200:

Many tube power amplifier to often (willingly or unwillingly) steps into the oblique universe where actual form and shape loses its original identity and deduce the original intent of primary amplifier role: the pure mirroring of the music without adding or subtracting something from the original music material.

Especially with The Sky Is Crying, signal integrity should be so far cry, but evenly distributed handling of the energy, motion and form.

Qualiton APR 200 locked to the Stevie Ray's playing with the firm grip and without sounding bland. Even more importantly, APR 200 materialized the excitement and potency, that has lurked into the epicenter of the music far above expected. Stevie Ray's tempestuous playing was harked with a believable impact and a sense of being there, that is crucial for any performance, that want ever remotely to be called high-end. APR 200 has lay down the essentials without sounding overemphasized and overblown, as its often connected with many tube amplifiers.

APR 204:

I might even cross the heretic line for like and loving Stevie Ray's rendition of Little Wing so much. Yes, Jimi Hendrix is THE mastermind behind it, but somehow Stevie Ray not only nails it to the perfection, but operates with the spirit within. After all the re-plays, I'm still mesmerized each time its on the repertoire. The leak, more then often, I even reach out for that virtual guitar!

There is so much tension and density within this particular song. As simplistic as it might seems from the outside, Little Wings curve for the augmented gain handling in order to reveal subtle and spatial attributes.

APR 204 has operated with a collective signal flow, allowing spectral quality of the music to stay firm, without nesting into the mechanical realm. The sonic potency of notes decay and delay development was enriched by the right tone. For its given price APR 204 enhanced heck a lot of density and gain purity, that brought big smile on my face. It at the end it's the sound that holds the highest merit.

Both Qualiton APX 200 and APR 204 have formed grand enough sonic shape shifting abilities to elevate themselves above the typical norms. In no way, to exactly stand out of the such a big audiophile products crowd, yet Audio Hungary pulled the right strings with the initial design of APX 200 power amplifier and APR 204 preamplifier.

CONCLUSION

We're living in the interesting times, where its too easy to be distracted by the continuing forte magnitude of déjà vu products. Anyone, that presents himself as audio connoisseur and genuine enthusiast needs to keep an open mind and welcome new companies, new products and new endeavors from our industry to test in niche market.

Its is even more encouraging, when something works beyond expected and differ enough to stand out of the crowd. Like with many products coming in and out of Mono & Stereo HQ's, I really didn't know exactly what to expect with Qualiton. Of course... I did my homework and look into the technical manuals and specs before the initial evaluation moment. Still, in one field you cannot exactly envision the exact sonic scenario. And at the end it's the sound that holds the highest merit.

Being around and doing this for a long time can be a double edged sword. On one side you can predict some of the impact with the upcoming product, based on the similarly designed products. On the other hand, being so felt absorbed and feeling all mighty prevents one to experience and discover some of the things, that are already out there or pop up every day.

In this field of work, genuine enthusiasm is the main force that drives and should ignite the reviewer regardless of mileage and recognition.

Investing into the tube electronic business in present times surely calls for quite some market research and healthy dose of objectivism and nonetheless optimism. Tube electronics, like vinyl are proving the opposite of what people in general would like to think (some audiophiles included). The lack, at moment they're highly opportunistic.

Audio Hungary Qualiton APX 200 and APR 204 brings a refreshing impact at the price point, that will open many doors. The sonic potency of Qualiton APX 200 with controlled power and with musicality, that can "give" one into a prolonged music listening.

For the value and the level of the sonic performance, that they're bringing I'm happily awarding both Audio Hungary Qualiton APX 200 AND APR 204 with the Mono and Stereo Best Buy Award.

I hope, that this is only the beginning of the Audio Hungary's foray at the high-end audio market.

More links

audiobungary.com

PRICE

MSRP: APR 204 - 1450€, APX 200 - 3200€

TECHNICAL

APX 200

- Rated output power: 2 x 100 W, stereo
- Total harmonic distortion: < 1% (f = 1 kHz, rated output power)
- Frequency response: 13 Hz - 100 kHz (-3 dB, rated output power)
- Input sensitivity: 663 mV unbalanced input
- Number of output ports: 1 unbalanced input per channel
- Number of output ports: 1 output terminal pair per channel
- Gain: +32.5 dB (8 Ohm) - +29.3 dB (4 Ohm)
- Input impedance: 10 kOhm
- Input impedance - Phono 47 kOhm
- Nominal load impedance: 4 Ohm and 8 Ohm
- Output polarity: non-inverting
- Signal-to-noise ratio: > 101 dB
- Power requirements: 220 V
- Tubes required: 4 x 6P45S; 2 x 6X25P; 2 x 12AX7LP
- Weight: 29.6 kg

APR 204

- Nominal output level: - Line 2 V
- Input sensitivity: - Line 500 mV; to nominal output level
- Input sensitivity: - Phono 5 mV; to nominal output level
- Number of input ports: 3 unbalanced input per channel, 1 MM level input per channel
- Number of output ports: 1 unbalanced line level output per channel, 1 headphone output per channel
- Max. input signal: - Line 2 V
- Max. input signal: - Phono 200 mV
- Gain: - Line +12 dB
- Gain: - Phono +52 dB (f = 1 kHz)
- Total harmonic distortion: - Line < 0.03% (f = 1 kHz; input level: 500 mV)
- Total harmonic distortion: - Phono < 0.3% (f = 1 kHz; input level: 5 mV)
- Frequency response: - Line 4 Hz - 300 kHz; (-1 dB)
- Frequency response: - Phono 20 Hz - 20 kHz; (-0.3 dB)
- Input impedance: - Line 100 kOhm
- Input impedance: - Phono 47 kOhm
- Signal-to-noise ratio: - Line > 100 dB
- Signal-to-noise ratio: - Phono > 70 dB
- Tubes required: 4 x Tungston ECC83; 2 x Tesla E88CC
- Weight: 8.4 kg

by: monoandstereo.com