Exposure 2010S2 CD/2010S2D £1,850

With several decades of experience doing smooth but gutsy amplifiers, this twosome should do well

As a brand, Exposure came to fame as a purveyor of high-end pre-power amplification back in the eighties, but launched its first integrated – the X – in 1988. Since then it has always been competitive in the mid-price sector, making a name for itself with its clean-sounding, punchy amplifiers. This combination is in the middle of Exposure’s main range, and is definitely ‘old school’, devoid of features like UPnP streaming. Indeed the CD player could easily be a mid-nineties product in the way it looks and feels, although as we’ll discover, not the sound. The all-aluminium casework of this British designed and built product is good if not luxurious, but the CD mechanism feels a tad flimsy. Inside, it’s a different matter and Exposure has gone to town with a large toroidal transformer with separate windings for the mech and audio stages and a high-precision master clock. A single Burr-Brown 24-bit/192kHz DAC chip is also fitted. The matching 2010S2D integrated is the little brother of the acclaimed 3010S2D (HFC 397), and has lots in common. Special cascode circuitry is used, with selected components in the signal path and discrete Toshiba power output transistors. A chunky 200VA custom-made toroidal power transformer is fitted, and together these make for a respectable 75W RMS per side. This neat amplifier is fairly minimalist in appearance and none the worse for it, with six analogue inputs including a tape monitor loop and an input that can be configured for moving magnet or moving coil phono stages if the optional £110 phono board is purchased. There’s a preamp output too, making bi-wiring easy.

Sound quality

The Exposure combo pushes the music ahead still further. Right from the beginning of the listening session it is clear that it brings extra dimension to the music. It combines all the good aspects of the other combos in this group, but goes just that bit further still. Most obvious is its tonality; along with the Arcam (reviewed on page 27), it proves the most sumptuous sounding duo here. From the opening bars of King, the keyboards just sound more vibrant, tactile and alive. It’s better located within the recorded acoustic too, and somehow one doesn’t pay much attention to the hi-fi aspects of the sound, so enjoyable is it to listen to. Speed Of Sound also takes on an extra dimension. It sounds more anhmonic, more uplifting and dramatic. Part of this is down to the excellent rhythmic gait of the combo, which pushes the song along with real verve along with the full-bodied tonality. Bass guitar has more thump than all here bar the Arcam combo, and the piano sounds has more thump than all here bar the Arcam combo, and the piano sounds more anthemic, more expressive. It gives a rousing rendition of Lorelei too, sounding powerful and expansive, without a hint of harshness. It’s a no-nonsense, fuss-free combo that’s designed to sound great, but lacks flexibility compared with its rivals here.

OUR VERDICT

LACK OF A PHONO STAGE MARKS THE 2010S2D AMPLIFIER OUT FROM THE OLD EXPOSURE X INTEGRATED FROM THE EIGHTIES, IN TERMS OF FACILITIES. THAT AND THE PREAMP OUTPUT, SO YOU CAN BI-AMP WITH THE MATCHING 2010S2 POWER AMP IF YOU SO DECIDE.

It has a good range of analogue line inputs alongside a tape monitor loop for the tiny number of three-head cassette or open reel decks that are still in use these days. There are no digital inputs on either the amp or the CD player, although the latter has coaxial and optical digital outs. Exposure seems to have made the decision to allocate more funds to the internals and less to convenience features, and the result is that it’s a great performer but lacks flexibility compared with its rivals here.

EIGHTIES THROWBACK

This combo is positively ‘old school’ in the way that it has been specified. Only the illuminated red LED on the volume knob, remote control and the lack of a phono stage marks the 2010S2D amplifier out from the old Exposure X integrated from the eighties, in terms of facilities. That and the preamp output, so you can bi-amp with the matching 2010S2 power amp if you so decide.

Exposure 2010S2 CD/2010S2D £1,850

Output: 2x 75W

2010S2 CD: 5kg

2010S2D: 7kg

WEBSITE exposurehifi.com

Dimensions (WxHxD)

2010S2 CD: 440 x 90 x 300mm

2010S2D: 440 x 90 x 310mm

Quoted power output: 2x 75W (8ohm)

Exposure Electronics Ltd

www.hifichoice.co.uk

GROUP TEST

UK

Type

CD player & integrated amplifier

WEBSITE

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