



THE BEST SAM YET

Audionet celebrates the birthday of its “evergreen” with a strictly limited special edition, elevating the potential of the integrated amplifier to a whole new level.

Audionet’s SAM is one of only a few integrated amplifiers that have established themselves to be fixed values in the editorial team’s collective memory. This is, of course, also due to the fact that we have come across it time and again over the past two decades. In 1999 we tested the early V2 version, in 2011 it was the turn of the Generation 2 (SAM G2, currently around 4490 Euro). In between both had spent several years as faithful test references in our listening rooms.

What makes the amp, whose manufacturer has migrated from Bochum to Berlin, so extraordinary is, inter alia, its external appearance, as there are not many integrated amplifiers that dare to cut out the volume control. Audionet sacrificed this most distinctive control-feature of any amp due to a simple, logical consideration:

Unimpeded signal flow

If aiming at the most efficient signal paths, the detour via a front potentiometer is, at

best, a compromise. After all, the inputs and thus the ideal location for pre-amplification are located at the opposite end of the cabinet. In fact, the SAM has a level control, and even an extremely high-quality one from Alps. However, its developers put it in the middle of the preamplifier circuit. The front buttons serve as control access to this remote-controlled motor potentiometer. Therefore, the control is, contrary to modern expectations, completely analogous. Sometimes the giant amp is criticized because the volume has to be selected via pushing the, haptically excellent, ball buttons, thus having to push through all levels in between – step by step. Also, the fact that even its input selection is operated via a rather slim device-menu is not appreciated by everyone. However, our many years of experience have taught us that such thoughts should not be bothered at all: 99.9 percent of the time one would anyway use the enclosed all-aluminum remote control.

Furthermore, the consistent shortening

of the signal routes leads us directly to the next point. In all its incarnations the amp sounded stunning and could always stand up to any potential competitors – sometimes even beyond the boundaries of its own class. Its unbelievable stage representation, a pithy dynamic spiced with lightning-fast attacks and the finely analytical but not in the least sober sound make Good Ol’ SAM the epitome of a thoroughly audiophile amplifier, which inspires outrageous fun when really going for the limits. With qualities of such versatility, one can go a long way.

On occasion of their super machine’s twentieth anniversary, the company decided to launch an exclusive, strictly limited to 200 units, special edition called SAM 20 SE. Externally, the solid aluminum block looks exactly like its model, the small copper plaque on the back, which identifies our device as number ten of the possible 200, being the only difference. On the inside, the basic circuit logic has been retained as well.

Audionet’s solid remote is produced for the 20 SE in an engraved special edition. ▶



However, during the development of the SE all modules and individual parts were carefully reevaluated and many, sometimes even whole functional blocks, replaced by higher quality substitutes. This upgrade offensive was, of course, based on newer amplifier models, as for example the amazing “WATT” (around 12,500 Euro), from which, e.g., the low-resistance power transistors were borrowed. Further, the entire internal wiring was replaced by pure gold and silver cables, while, wherever relevant to the sound, high-quality mica capacitors were implemented.

A lot more than just fine-tuning has been done at the phono board. This is offered on the SAM G2 as an option with extra charge (around 500 Euro), but is fitted as standard on the SE. It is also a completely revised version of the board, which has as well been equipped with an armada of mica capacitors and improved operational amplifiers. Out of the box our test sample was prepared for MM-operation. Using a total of four jumper banks, the equalizer can, however, also be adapted filigree and separately to the impedance and gain factor of any MC system.

Phono included

To emphasize the anniversary model's exclusivity, its front panel and remote control were not simply imprinted but engraved. The rest is the same as on the original: it has six gold-plated analog inputs, one of which is balanced and another reserved for phono. Amplified

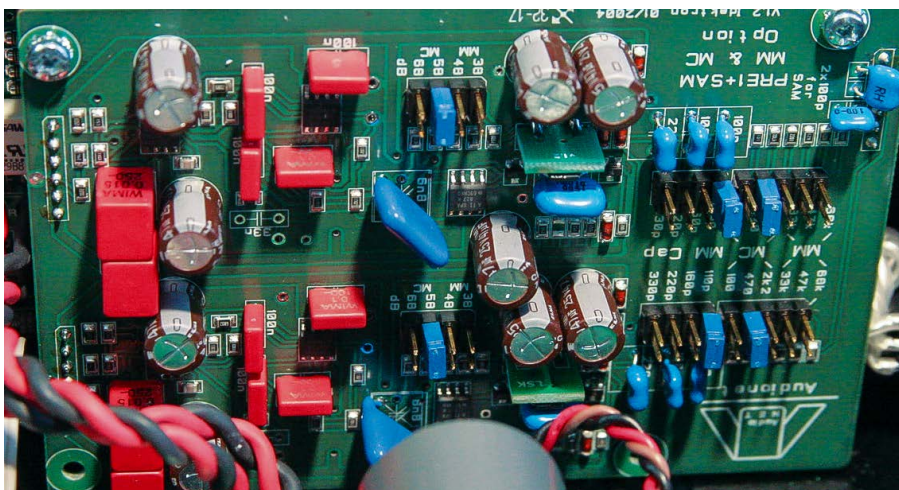
signals are sent out via elegant loudspeaker terminals from Furutech. A recorder, subwoofer or power amp can be connected via pre- and line-out. If there appears to be no signal after connection there is no need to panic, as the outputs are deactivated by default. The fixed indication of the mains phase deserves praise, while opinions on the headphone jack might be divided: hidden on the rear, directly underneath the LS terminals, the large output socket is not located very accessibly.

As expected, soundwise the 20 SE is in a class of its own. Transparent, crisp and spatially extremely resolved, it lets loudspeakers and walls literally disappear. It depicts voices and instruments with sharp, almost sculptural contours on a huge stage. It, therefore, becomes a breathtaking experience to listen to Black Sabbath's “Warning” from their debut album. The guitar soli were well distributed over the panorama and formed a contrast to the otherwise rather

dryly mixed song with its short delays and room reverberation. On B&W's 800 D3, the SAM brings them to life so vividly and three-dimensionally that you think you can reach into the strings.

However, the amplifier also throws even earth-shaking bass impulses cleanly and drawn with superb detail into the listening room. Just under 180 watts into four ohms and pulses of up to 232 watts ensure that it never runs out of breath and give energy and flow to its exemplary orderly, always clear and tonally balanced style. The 20

KEYWORD
Mica capacitor:
 „mica“ is a term describing layered mineral crystals that have already been used as dielectrics in capacitors since the 1920s.



▲ The equipped-as-standard phono board was revised for the 20 SE and differs in many details from the optional board that can be retrofitted in the SAM G2 for about 500 Euro.

SE deliberately drives the strengths of the serial model to perfection and thus shows the potential that was hidden in the SAM G2 circuits — but only for a limited time.

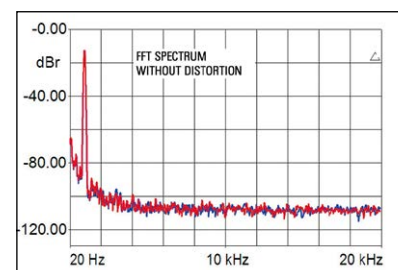
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AUDIONET SAM 20 SE

around 6990 €
 Dimensions: 43 x11 x39 cm (WxHxD)
 Warranty: 2 years
 Contact: Idektron
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 www.audionet.de

The limited-edition anniversary model builds on proven strengths and does the SAM credit: spatially, orderly and incredibly dynamic, it combines audiophile virtues with an unbelievably joyful musicality. It is almost a bit sad that it will be limited to 200 copies.

LAB MEASUREMENTS



Continuous power (8 Ohm / 40hm)	103 W/179 W
Pulse power 4 Ohm (1kHz)	232 W
THD at 50mW/5W/1dB Pmax	0.003 %/0.001 %/0.002 %
Intermod. 50mW/5W/1dB Pmax	0.005 %/0.002 %/0.04 %
Signal to noise ratio at 50mW/ 5W	86.8 dB/106.5 dB
Signal to noise ratio Phono MM (5 mV for 5W)	79.4 dB(A)
Attenuation at 4 Ohm (63Hz/1kHz/14kHz)	142/149/200
Upper cut-off frequency (-3dB/40hm)	>80 kHz
Crosstalk Line 1 > Line	2 93.4 dB
Stereo channel separation at 10kHz	75.3 dB

LAB COMMENTS: The measured values are consistently impeccable. Interestingly, the SAM defends itself against wrong power connection. If the mains phase is incorrectly connected to the cable, the amp indicates this on the display.

FEATURES

One balanced XLR input, one phono input (MM/MC), four asymmetrical RCA inputs, one record and one pre-out each, one pair of Furutech LS terminals, remote control, English manual

STEREO-TEST

SOUND QUALITY 94%

PRICE/PERFORMANCE

★★★★☆

EXCELLENT