



With its new top-line, Cambridge Audio is pushing into unprecedented price and sound dimensions. Finally, we were able to welcome the integrated amplifier „Edge A“ into our listening room.

Have you already had the opportunity to hear an amplifier from Cambridge Audio? The CXA80 perhaps? An 851A? Then you won't be surprised about what I'm going to say over the next few lines: the new flagship blends harmoniously into the British manufacturer's tradition and radiates musicality all the way down to its circuitry. To be honest, what else would you expect from a company that garnishes the business cards of its employees with the most emotional moments of their favorite songs and runs a live club at its London headquarters? These gentlemen live their passion and transfer that spirit to all their components.

As familiar as the character of the "Edge A" seems, as extraordinary it is. Cambridge Audio is firmly anchored in our minds as a brand that offers great value for little money. When technical director

Dominic Baker and marketing director Mark Whiteman visited our editorial office last autumn they whispered to us that an amplifier for 5,000 euros was coming up. Initially we believed there must have been a misunderstanding. However, just a few moments later the first pictures of the huge new level control flickered across the computer screen, and it dawned on us that the two of them suffered neither from a lack of oxygen nor coffee. Celebrating their 50th anniversary, Cambridge Audio wanted to reward its developers for their great work by giving them the "go" to design a dream amplifier. And promptly they sketched a concept full of contrasts that comes across as modest on the outside, but is in fact full of technical finesse on the inside.

The Edge A has a single button that switches it on and off. There is auto standby, which can be turned off using a

rear switch. The central control element is the highly visible and lavishly dimensioned controller consisting of 31 individual parts, whose linear control path ensures perfect handling of the 195 watt continuous output. Only at twelve o'clock does the amp reach a slightly-above-normal volume. So there is plenty of room to minutely fine-tune the quieter levels. Just as everything else on this amplifier, the encoder is handcrafted. For stepless transitions, the British use a digital converter called MDAC on the inside, which calculates more than 65,000 level steps and forwards them to a resistance network as control instructions. This network is located at the rear of the case directly in the preamplifier – even though it is digitally controlled, the signal remains analog at all times.

On the shaft of the controller there is a handy ring which switches through a total of nine



◀ To underline the Edge's uncompromising appearance, Cambridge Audio designed an indestructible metal remote control.



British company to a physically tangible level and wrapped it in an equally charming design. Cambridge at its best!

Carsten Barnbeck

▲ The stable signal connections reveal the Edge A's symmetrical double mono construction.

inputs. Here is also our only small point of criticism about the Edge's fascinating design. Since the inscription of the ring-shaped diodes is already impossible to read from just one meter of distance and because there are no direct selection keys on the remote control, you'll have to learn by heart which device was connected on which input.

On the other hand, the Edge's connectivity is flawless. It offers two gold-plated chinch inputs and a balanced XLR input. The built-in D/A converter accepts optical or coaxial signals and has a computer connection in USB 2.0 format. The HDMI connection for the TV ARC is rather unusual but appreciated. The integrated Sabre-DAC processes signals up to 24/192 and has a fixed tuning, so you don't have to deal with any digital filters. With the preselected settings, the converter plays extremely musical, focused and atmospheric. The package is rounded off by Bluetooth in aptX HD format with a bandwidth of 576 kilobits. Of course, it also accepts normal aptX, MP3 and AAC.

There are outputs in form of single-wire terminals, as well as two pre-outs, which are first and foremost intended to be used with the stereo power amp "Edge W" (around 3000€). Together with the Edge A, a combination of "Edge NQ" controller preamplifier (for 4000 euros including network player) and the mentioned power amplifier was launched. Latter was derived directly from the Class AB power plants of the Edge A and is therefore also recommended as a perfect bi-amping supplement.

With nearly 200 watts and impulse peaks of up to 250 watts, the Edge is a

proper powerhouse. Thanks to its over-powered network topography, it even plays as confidently and powerfully as if it had twice the power. At its heart are two huge toroidal transformers located, which are mounted in opposite phase on top of each other, thus terminating part of their magnetic fields. A third transformer feeds all of the digital circuitry. The output stages are located directly next to the power supply and have open, rail-like power lines. Although the superbly crafted aluminum housing can be opened by loosening just two screws, an amateur should definitely leave his fingers away from the delicate inner workings. The headphone output on the front panel completely switches off the power amplifiers and thus saves a lot of energy during use.

Due to the substantial reserves of power, the Edge A filigree works out dynamic fine gradations. It is a fast, high-precision amplifier for which interferences such as distortion and intermodulation are entirely unknown. If you want it to, it can blow properly bone-dry and pumping bass waves into the listening room, for example on speakers like DALI's Epicon 6. However, such a spectacle is not its primary profession. It much

prefers to express a brilliance and soul to voices like Leslie Feist's in the enchanting "Graveyard", letting the listener melt away completely. Silky timbres and a tickle of finest undertones are masterfully depicted! Our speakers disappeared entirely as a source of sound and one could completely surrender to the illusion of the instruments and voices standing on a real and huge stage.

As I said in the beginning, you'd not expect any less from Cambridge Audio. With their Edge, however, the unleashed development-team actually succeeded in bringing the beguiling sound world of the

KEYWORD

TV ARC:

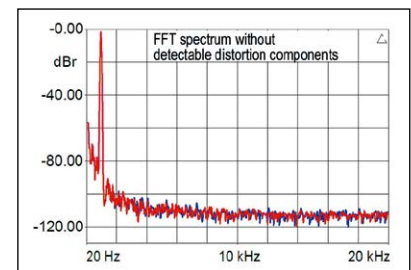
Modern TVs can often send their audio signals via HDMI to amplifiers. This „Audio Return Channel“ (ARC) also transports control signals, to enable controlling the amplifier's volume via the TV remote control.

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO EDGE A

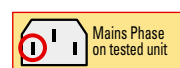
Price: around 5000 €
 Dimensions: 47 x16 x47 cm (WxHxD)
 Warranty: 5 years
 Contact: Cambridge Audio
 Phone: +44 20 7940 2200,
 www.cambridgeaudio.com

Cambridge Audio is rewarding itself for 50 years of good work and gives its fans the best amplifier the British have ever designed: musical, colorful and unmatched dynamics!

MEASUREMENT RESULTS



Signal-to-noise ratio referred to 24 bits	97.6 dB
Signal-to-noise ratio referred to 16 bit	88.2 dB
Signal-to-noise ratio digital zero	98.2 dB
Converter linearity at -90dBFS	0.1 dB
Continuous power (8 Ohm / 4 Ohm)	117.4 W/195 W
Pulse power 4 Ohm (1kHz)	248 W
THD at 50mW/5W/1dB Pmax	0.01 / 0.001 / 0.002 %
Intermod. 50mW/5W/1dB Pmax	0.0003 / 0.0006 / 0.8 %
Signal-to-noise ratio at 50mW/ 5W	71.4 dB/91.2 dB
Attenuation at 4 Ohm (63Hz/1kHz/14kHz)	100/90/50
Upper cut-off frequency (-3dB/40hm)	>80 kHz
Crosstalk Line 1 > Line 2	92.4 dB
Synchronization error Volume at -60dB	0.08 dB
Power up. Stby./idle (at)	<2 W/160 W



LAB COMMENTS: Very good, unshakably stable performance data meet exceptionally low distortion and modulation values as well as a high signal-to-noise ratio.

FEATURES

3 analog inputs (2 x Cinch, 1 x XLR), 3 digital inputs (1 x coaxial, 2 x optical) USB audio, HDMI In (TV ARC), Bluetooth incl. AptX HD, single-wire terminal, 2 pre-outs (Cinch/XLR), remote control

STEREO-TEST

SOUND QUALITY 89%

PRICE/PERFORMANCE

★★★★☆

EXCELLENT