

Taller than the typical amp, the extra height goes a long way in setting the Vitus amplifiers apart, lending stature to the strength of the wonderfully austere design. My amps came in black, though they are available in silver as well. The SM-101's front panel sports three buttons on the left side of their recessed acrylic center strip which embodies the Vitus Audio "V" reads: Standby, choose between Class A, A/B and Output status via single-ended or AES/EBU. You can also adjust for brightness of the display as well. The rear of the SM-101 sports some great binding posts. Why doesn't every manufacturer use these? It is a total mystery to me. If it adds \$100 to the cost of a high-end amp, it would be well worth it. I cannot imagine any potential purchaser not willing to pay for such a well thought-out feature. And if there is any question about the "I take myself way too seriously" attitude embodied by many high-end designers, then look no further than the description behind Vitus here: [www.Vitusaudio.com](http://www.Vitusaudio.com).

Yes, the build quality is exemplary. The casework is freaking lust-inducing gorgeous. But by my math, \$50K per pair breaks down to \$500 a watt, by far and away the highest price per watt ratio I have listened to—in or out of my home. Quite frankly, I had no idea the amps were rated only 100 watts per channel when I received them. I probably would never have agreed to review them, as I know for a fact that 100 watts could never, ever even on a good day drive the VR7 in my huge room. Perhaps the Focus Master II, but they were waiting to be upgraded so my first impressions came via the VR7.

Right out of the box, I knew something special, very special was happening. While perhaps a tad cool and a bit on the lean side, the sound was so clean, so clear and focused, my system no longer sounded familiar. I simply was not prepared for the dramatic change. After all, while amps are important, their differences are usually pretty subtle, more often differentiated by shifts in tonal balance and the varying characteristics related to power/control. This is a simplification of my experience, for sure. However, I have listened to probably a dozen or more amps in the last few years. Some of them were very good, a couple great and in the case of the last amp I reviewed, the Karan Acoustics KA S450 a phenomenal piece of gear.

### **Then came the Vitus SM-101**

What sets the Vitus apart? First off, within it's limits, and every component has them, the bass control /transient speed and dynamic impact is the best I have encountered from a solid state amplifier. It is truly astounding, astonishing or just go ahead and make up a word that goes beyond these adjectives to describe the performance those 100 pure Class A watts provide. Every disc I played to evaluate the bass of these amps was transformed. The absence of any coloration, darkening, bloating, spreading of warmth into the mid-bass or lower midrange allowed for intense rhythmic pace and swing. Track one "War Heads" from Extreme's Three Side to Every Story (A&M31454) explodes after the intro with a kick drum dominated back beat. I have listened to this track at least a thousand times, and I am here to tell you, it has never sounded anything like this. Some amps make it sound big and bold, some make it sound a bit leaner but tighter and drier. The Vitus gets it perfectly balanced. The lower registers are fast, with chest thumping power yet perfectly defined and resonant without the drying out of the drums natural bloom. The interplay with the bass guitar is so perfectly integrated and clear. This is no small task as the recording of the bass line is extremely tight, not to mention the precision and speed with which the bass is played.

With the bass foundation established, all types of music benefitted from this transparency and lack of noise. And it all come back to down to the noise floor folks. The best components designs have dealt thoroughly with this issue, as have all great audio systems. I have recently included the PS Audio Harvesters in concert with the Shakti Audio Stones. Each addresses noise from different angles. The Harvesters are in-line AC devices the remove noise from the flow of electricity. The stones are passive objects placed on or under components removing EMI/RFI. With them, the majesty of the Vitus' vast silence reveals a level of texture, detail and