

space that has left me using such glowing terms over and over to describe these amps.

Head man Clement Perry and I often talk about how a great system can never be geared towards or play one type of music over another. Sound is sound whether being created by an oboe or a Stratocaster. It is understandable if the listener listens only to classical or jazz for instance, to settle on components that may mimic one characteristic or another, but at this level, the component in question should be the servant, never the master when answering the music's demands. In this vain, the Vitus utterly succeeds. From the very depths of the bass through the ultra sonic high frequencies, the lack of distortion allows the Vitus to personify what neutrality could and should be in the best sense of the word. It is truly uncanny and once experienced, there is no going back.

Within the context of these products, the system really came together with the inclusion of the Vitus Andromeda interconnects, speaker wire and AC power cords. Designed by partner Anders Grove, founder and designer of the highly regarded Argento brand of cables is considered a talent who knows his way around wire. As with the amplifiers, the effect is immediate and unmistakable. Naturally warm, open, exquisitely detailed and unrestricted dynamics come together in equal measure. There is a lack of any grain or tonal unevenness to get in the way. An entire review could be dedicated to the Vitus wire and when time permits, I will elaborate further, perhaps when I review the Vitus preamp and the soon to be released Vitus CD player.

I have yet to hear an analog/solid state amp that is able to unravel and so tightly focus individual sounds and images within the mix while at once sounding of one piece and coherent. The freedom from the overlay of noise gives each and every corner of the soundstage space to breath and "light up" as the music demands. The Grieg Piano Concerto from Chesky Records(CD050) demonstrates this well. While not the finest classical recording, the performance is passionate and the soundstage is wide and deep, if a bit recessed. The Vitus SM-101s delineate the piano and anchor it to the stage with surprising clarity. The horns that seem to appear out of no were light up the rear of hall, again with great precision and focus. This is an amp that banishes ambiguity into a distant memory.

If there is a rub, and if it's made by man there's one, it is the absence of distortion and coloration may be difficult to keep from straying into the lean or cool side of the spectrum. The Vitus wire's natural, even handed balance helps a great deal in this regard. As would a speaker with an open fleshed out mid-band. The Focus Master II with its upgraded crossover coil in place really fit the bill. The Von Shweikert VR7, while no slouch sounded a bit pinched and edgy when partnered with the SM-101. With the Master II comes a synergy that leaves little doubt as to either component's proficiency. The Master II posses a mid band and treble that is as smooth as can be allowing voices soar through the frequency range without any ringing or "shouting". With the help of the Tact 2.2x room correction preamp, I can further correct for spectral imbalances and contour the sound with little penalty. A terrific example of the Vitus/Focus mid band strength is Willie Nelson's "Healing Hands of Time". The moment the song moves beyond the opening and the performance opens up with the full orchestra supported by a wonderfully potent and extended bass, the sound through the Vitus amps can only be described as majestic. This is a disc that is really easy to get wrong. Nelson's voice is very closely mic'd and carries an edge that can be grating if the component embellishes in that direction. While the Vitus amps clearly reveal this in the recording, it tracks the intensity of the mid band forwardness with a very precise touch, while getting every thing around this narrow band of trouble just right .

Conclusion

This first look at the Vitus SM-101 mono block amplifiers has been a real eye and ear opener. 100 watts of Class A amplification that behaves like 300 watts or more. A noise floor reduced by a magnitude creating a un-mistakable sense of precision, speed, neutrality and control all add up to a compelling musical presentation un matched in these areas by any analog solid