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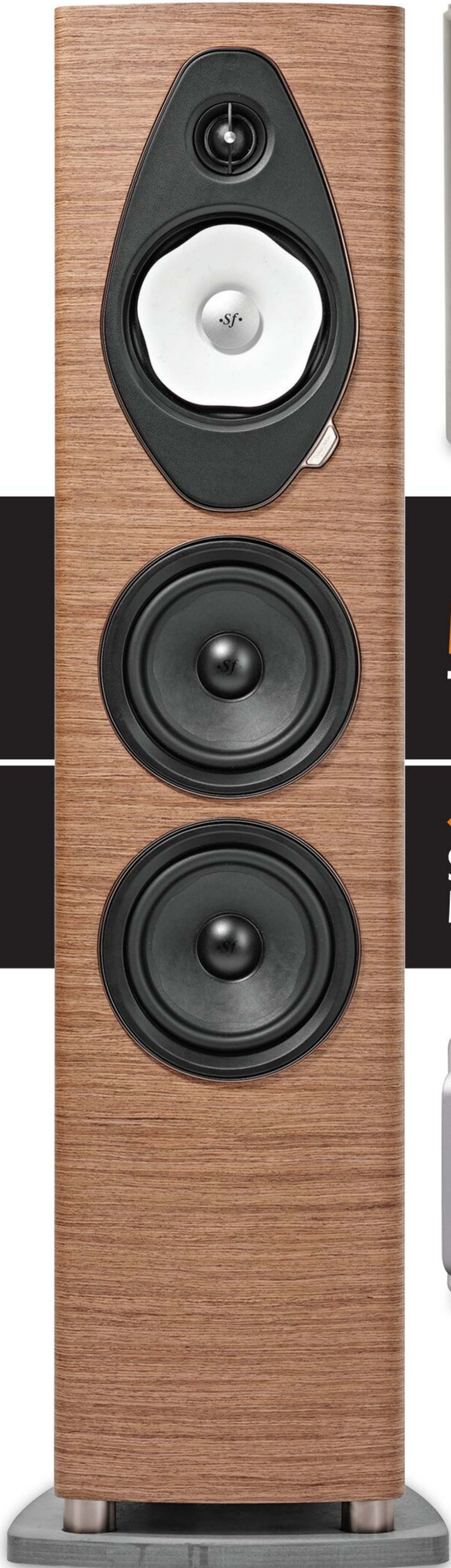
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JASON VICTOR SERINUS

Moon 861

POWER AMPLIFIER



It is unusual to begin a review with a detailed discussion of setup. But setup protocol for the Moon 861 power amplifier (\$22,000 each), the top-level amplifier in the North Collection from Moon, which I reviewed bridged in mono, proved crucial to its sound.

The setup saga began when Moon co-owner Costa Koulisakis traveled to Port Townsend from Quebec to help remove two 861 amplifiers from their sturdy flight cases and set them up. (We also set up the Moon 891 Network Player/DAC, which I'll review next month, with and without the 861s.) First, he noted that Moon designed the 861s to rest on amp stands, supported by the amps' specially designed feet, which contain a suspension system composed of O-rings, a poron damping pad of specific density, and a contact point composed of dense ABS (like Legos). "Besides absorbing some external and internal vibration, these new footers also help level the amplifier when it is placed on an uneven surface," he said. "Each foot will compress a different amount to prevent the amplifier from rocking in any direction."

Koulisakis explained that Moon voiced the 861 three different ways: on HRS amp stands, on a granite surface, and directly on the floor of their main listening room, which has very low-pile carpet glued directly to a concrete floor. "The HRS stand works best, but the 861's elaborate footing system already does a portion of the work that a good amp stand will do."

Koulisakis lamented that my Grand Prix Monza amp stands were too small to accommodate the 861s. Not because the 861 is gargantuan; far from it. Rather, my amp stands are smaller than the norm to enable them to fit in tight spaces. In addition, each stand's four support pillars extend higher than their bamboo shelves and are situated more or less where the Moon 861's support feet would make contact. No way, José.

The solution seemed simple enough. I customarily place Wilson Audio Pedestals between all my components and the Monza system's bamboo shelves. When I mentioned that the Pedestals would raise the amps higher than the stands' corner pillars (which are hardly of Greek-temple proportions), Koulisakis cautioned that

the Moon's bottom cover was not designed to support the weight of the amplifier on its own. As much as he lamented that placing the amps directly on my bamboo flooring (which sits atop cement, with a very thin requisite layer of felt in between) might subject them to undue vibrations, he saw the floor as the only practical solution.

Once the amps had warmed up, their sound was not what I'd expected¹ after hearing them in Chicago and Munich. Nor, I sensed, was it what Koulisakis expected. After discussing alternatives, we decided that the way forward, which I'd pursue after he left, was to obtain two sturdy 19" × 21" pieces of particle board, which would be far less resonant than either plywood or many hardwoods; place them atop my bamboo shelves with Wilson Pedestals in between; and use the 861's suspension feet to support the amps on the particle board. Think British double-decker bus with an observation tower atop.

Port Townsend may be a small, rural community, but it's also a Victorian seaport arts colony and the wooden boat capital of the United States. After exploring a basic lumber shop and a specialty hardwood supplier, I visited an artisan cabinetmaker. I knew I'd found the right place when I saw above the cabinetmaker's desk a CD of Glenn Gould playing Bach. It got even better when his assistant showed me his homemade speaker/amplifier rig. I returned home with two heavy, 1" thick slabs of high-density particle board. Friend Scott and I repositioned the amps and found the sound so opposite to what we'd initially heard that I felt I owed both Moon and readers a third, middle-ground alternative.

After many days of pondering, I initiated a WhatsApp chat with Koulisakis. "I've been thinking and thinking, and like one of the Wise Men of Chelm, I think I've come up with a marvelous solution."

Koulisakis agreed that if I positioned the Pedestals beneath the 861s' solid heat fins, no damage would be done to the amp's bottom



panel. If I moved the amps back on the stands so that their fronts rested behind the corner support pillars and their rears extended several inches beyond the stands, I could safely support them by positioning Pedestals under either end of their heat fins. Which is what the husband and I proceeded to do. Suffice to say that what I heard most resembled what I'd expected to hear.

Whether reading this leaves you fascinated, bored to tears, or shaking your head at how much time I spent on setup, please hear me out. Three different, totally plausible setup options yielded three distinct sounds. Setup may be less crucial when the 861s are paired with components less capable of producing the fine gradations of timbre, nuance, dynamics, and shading than those in my reference system, but it can make a major difference when you're setting up components whose sound justifies their five- and six-figure price tags. Even though it took multiple pairs of hands

¹ Per *Stereophile's* reviewer policy, I did not share what I heard.

SPECIFICATIONS

Description Dual-mono power amplifier bridgeable to mono. Inputs: Stereo pair balanced (XLR), single-ended (RCA), 15A IEC. Outputs: Two pair spade-lug binding posts. Output power, stereo: 300Wpc into 8 ohms, 600Wpc into 4 ohms (both 24.77dBW); mono: 800W into 8 ohms (29dBW), 1400W into 4 ohms (28.45dBW). Input

sensitivity: 1.4V at full rated output power. Input impedance: 47k ohm. Gain: 31dB. Frequency response: 2Hz–100kHz (+0/–3dB). Crosstalk: –119dB. THD, 1W: 0.002%; 200W: 0.001%. IMD: 0.006%. S/N ratio: 119dB. Damping factor: 900. Power consumption: 85W at idle, 75W full power standby, 1.25W low-power standby.

Dimensions 18.95" (481mm) W × 8.26" (210mm) H × 24.0" (609mm) D. Weight: 122.6lb (55.6kg).

Finish Silver and black.

Serial numbers of units reviewed 311A22426038, 311A22426039 (auditioning), 311A22426220 (measuring). Manufactured in Canada.

Price \$22,000/each. Approxi-

mate number of dealers: 59 US, 97 North America. Warranty: 10 years, parts & labor with registration.

Manufacturer

Simaudio Ltd., 1345 Newton Rd., Boucherville, Quebec, J4B 5H2, Canada.

Tel: 450 449-2212.

Web: simaudio.com.

and a fair amount of sweat to satisfactorily position the 861s, it's what was necessary to give them their just due in audiophile court.

To learn the verdict of judge and jury—that's me—please read on.

The evidence

Everyone who has ever attended a presentation by Costa Koulisakis knows that the man speaks with completeness. Simaudio's 13-page user manual² describes the 861 as an "MDCA—MOON Distortion-Cancelling Amplifier" in dual-mono configuration with no global feedback, special MOON transistors, a monaural-mode toggle switch, MOONLink (a proprietary wiring system for use with other Moon products), and multicolor LED indicator. Koulisakis expanded on this in our hourlong interview, following up with a summary document in which he reiterated what makes the 861 unique.

Compared to the Moon 860A v2 amplifier I reviewed in November 2022,³ the 861 is what Koulisakis termed a "revolutionary" design that evolved from its predecessor. "Thanks to what we learned from the 860A v2, we developed so many new ideas that we could only implement them if we redesigned the circuitry from scratch," he said.

"We focused on signal correction and feedback. As an audio signal passes through an amplifier's gain stages and is amplified, it accumulates a certain amount of distortion. Amplifiers typically employ some form of signal correction to reduce that distortion. Since the 1990s, our amplifiers have reduced distortion without using a global feedback loop, which feeds the amplified signal back to



the input. Because global feedback loops can affect sound quality, and the local feedback that's often used to correct the individual gain stages also has its downsides, our approach utilizes different and more accurate, 'real-time' distortion correction."

Simaudio's new Moon Distortion-Cancelling Amplifier (MDCA) technology dispenses with all forms of feedback. Instead, it performs signal correction in a special proprietary parallel circuit path that is outside the path of the audio signal. A small "correction" signal, applied only to the output stage, is said to reduce distortion by almost a factor of 10 at high power. Simaudio (the company that produces Moon-branded hi-fi products) claims that this type of signal correction is more efficient than any type of

² See [simaudio.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/20240506-User-Manual-861-En.pdf](https://www.simaudio.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/20240506-User-Manual-861-En.pdf).

³ See [stereophile.com/content/simaudio-moon-860a-v2-power-amplifier](https://www.stereophile.com/content/simaudio-moon-860a-v2-power-amplifier).

MEASUREMENTS

Simaudio's Moon 861 can be operated as a conventional two-channel amplifier or, by bridging the two output stages, as a monoblock. I performed a complete set of measurements in both modes on a different sample from those auditioned by Jason Victor Serinus. Mine had the serial number 311A22426220. I mainly used my Audio Precision SYS2722 system¹ for the testing, repeating some of the measurements with the magazine's higher-performance APx555 system. I preconditioned the Moon 861 by following the FTC's recommendation of running it in stereo mode at one-eighth the specified power into 8 ohms for an hour.² At the end of that time, the temperature of the top panel was 92.5°F (33.6°C) but that of the side-mounted heatsinks was almost too hot to touch, at 132.1°F (55.6°C).

In both stereo and mono modes, the Moon preserved absolute polarity with both the unbalanced and balanced inputs. The balanced input impedance was the specified 47k ohms in the bass and mid-range, dropping inconsequentially to 38k ohms at the top of the audioband. For the single-ended inputs, I measured 25k ohms at 20Hz and 1kHz, 15k ohms at 20kHz. These measurements were taken with the inputs direct-coupled, but there was no difference in AC-coupled mode. The voltage gain at 1kHz into 8 ohms in stereo mode was close to the specified 31dB, at 31.4dB. As expected, the gain in mono mode was 6dB higher.

The output impedance in stereo mode was extremely low, at 0.008 ohms at 20Hz and 1kHz, rising slightly to 0.03 ohms at 20kHz. As the two output stages are in

¹ See [stereophile.com/content/measurements-maps-precision](https://www.stereophile.com/content/measurements-maps-precision).

² See [stereophile.com/content/ftc-updates-amplifier-rule](https://www.stereophile.com/content/ftc-updates-amplifier-rule).

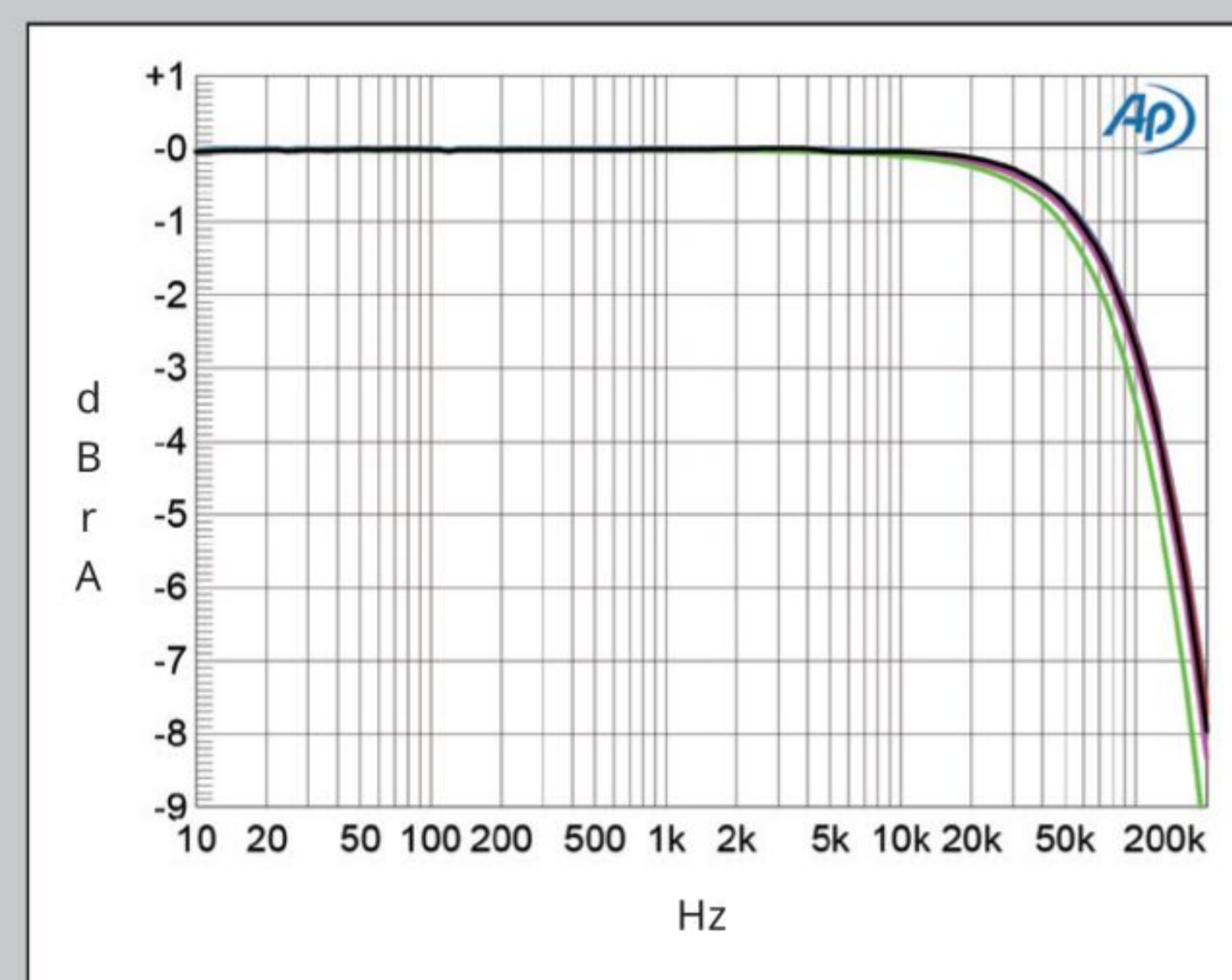


Fig.1 Moon 861, stereo mode, frequency response at 2.83V into: simulated loudspeaker load (gray), 8 ohms (left channel blue, right red), 4 ohms (left cyan, right magenta), and 2 ohms (red) (1dB/vertical div.).

feedback loop because, among other reasons, it does not rely upon a high-gain, high-power signal path.

“When signal correction is determined outside the signal path, we can keep the audio path simpler and free of unwanted side effects that result from correcting within the signal path,” Kouli-sakis said. “The 861’s input stage is also very special and unusual because it duplicates the incoming signal of each channel and then routes one of the two signals of each channel for signal correction. Having parallel signal paths also helps lower output impedance and increase the damping factor.

“We use a precision comparator circuit that determines the amount of distortion and injects a correction signal into the signal path at the output stage. This is not an audio signal in the normal sense; it’s a minute signal that offsets the accumulated distortions in all the gain stages. Because MDCA determines the distortion component outside the signal path, this technology works better than any feedback loop *within* the signal path that attempts to reduce distortion by re-injecting the audio signal back into it. Our signal correction also works much faster as it compares the input and output signals and determines the required minute signal corrections in real time; this enables the amplifier to respond faster and produce a cleaner, lower-distortion, and more accurate output signal.”

That’s the “revolutionary” bit. In addition, the size of the 861’s

power supply and chassis have increased, as have output power and weight. Its dual-mono design, balanced circuitry, low-impedance proprietary Moon output transistors, and parts quality are similar to its predecessor’s. To meet European safety standards and allow a more secure fit, the company has replaced WBT binding posts with Furutech binding posts that accept bigger spades. Currently, however, the narrow opening for spade lugs is only on the bottom. That works well for people who don’t want their speaker wires to show but less well for owners with low racks who want to prevent cabling from touching the floor.

Details

The Moon 861’s attractive front panel is blessedly free of bells, whistles, and unnecessary clutter. It includes a discretely placed button that toggles the amp between “active” and “inactive” modes (ie, on and standby), and a status indicator light that differentiates between powering up, normal operation, and firmware update status. The light’s unusual placement and shape add to the amp’s distinct aesthetics.

There’s more action on the rear. Beyond two pairs of speaker output posts and single pairs of balanced and single-ended inputs, the rear panel holds toggle switches that allow the user to choose between balanced and unbalanced operation and AC/DC (capacitor/direct) coupling, one for each channel. There’s also a stereo/mono

measurements, continued

series in mono mode, the output impedances were twice the stereo values. In both stereo and mono modes, the variation in the frequency response with our standard simulated loudspeaker³ (fig.1, gray trace) was negligible. The response into resistive loads in both modes was flat in the audio-band and didn’t reach -3dB until 110kHz. Fig.1 was taken with the balanced inputs and with the inputs direct-coupled; the response with the unbalanced inputs was identical, and when I repeated the measurement with the inputs AC-coupled, the only difference was that the output at 10Hz dropped by 1dB. With its wide small-signal bandwidth, the Moon’s reproduction of a 10kHz squarewave into 8 ohms featured very short risetimes in both modes (fig.2), with no overshoot or ringing.

Channel separation in stereo mode (not shown) was superb, at >120dB in both directions below 2kHz and still 104dB at the top of the audioband. In stereo mode, the unweighted, wideband signal/noise ratio taken with the input shorted to ground was an excellent 86.3dB ref. 1W into 8 ohms in both channels. This ratio improved to 93.9dB when the measurement bandwidth was restricted to the audioband, and to 96.6dB when A-weighted. The ratios were slightly lower in mono mode but still respectably high. Spectral analysis of the low-frequency noise floor while the Moon drove a 1kHz tone at 1Wpc into 8 ohms in stereo mode revealed that while power

supply-related spurious at the odd-order harmonics of 60Hz were measurable, all were inconsequential, laying at or below -109dB (fig.3). As expected, given the 6dB greater gain in mono mode, the level of

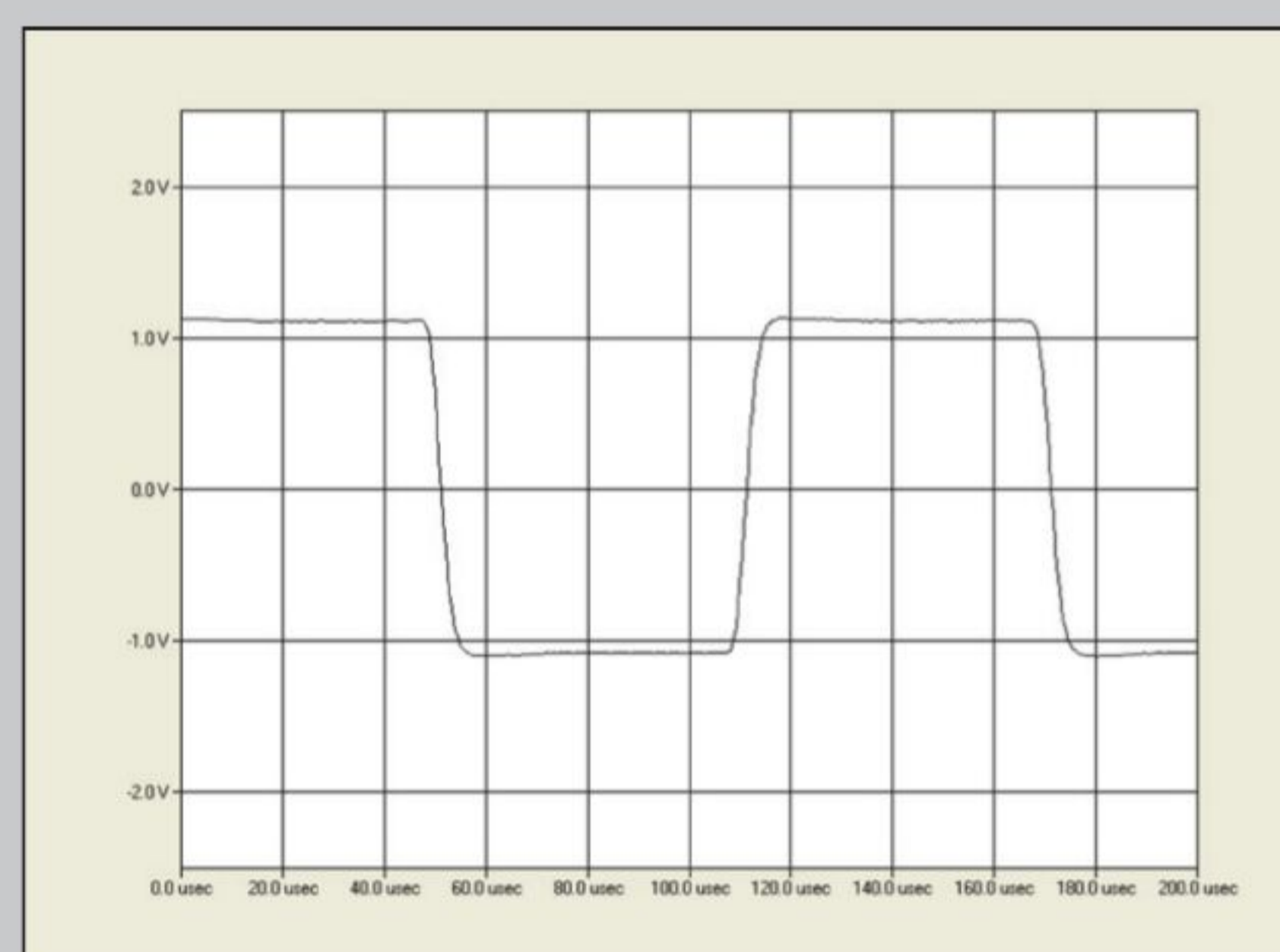


Fig.2 Moon 861, mono and stereo modes, small-signal 10kHz squarewave into 8 ohms.

the random noise floor was 6dB higher, and those supply-related spurious increased by 12dB (fig.4).

3 See stereophile.com/content/real-life-measurements-page-2.

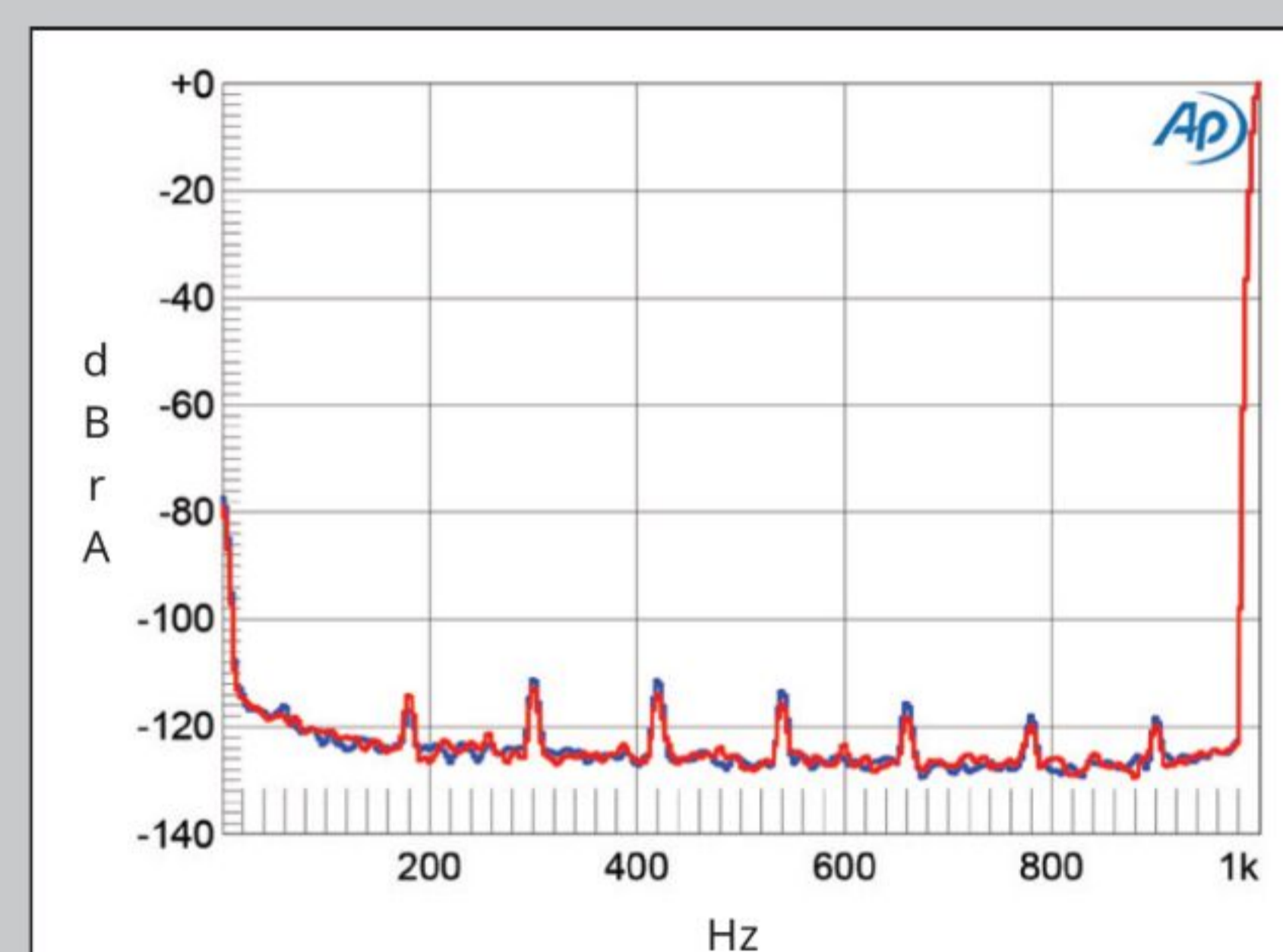


Fig.3 Moon 861, stereo mode, spectrum of 1kHz sine wave, DC-1kHz, at 1Wpc into 8 ohms (left channel blue, right red; linear frequency scale).

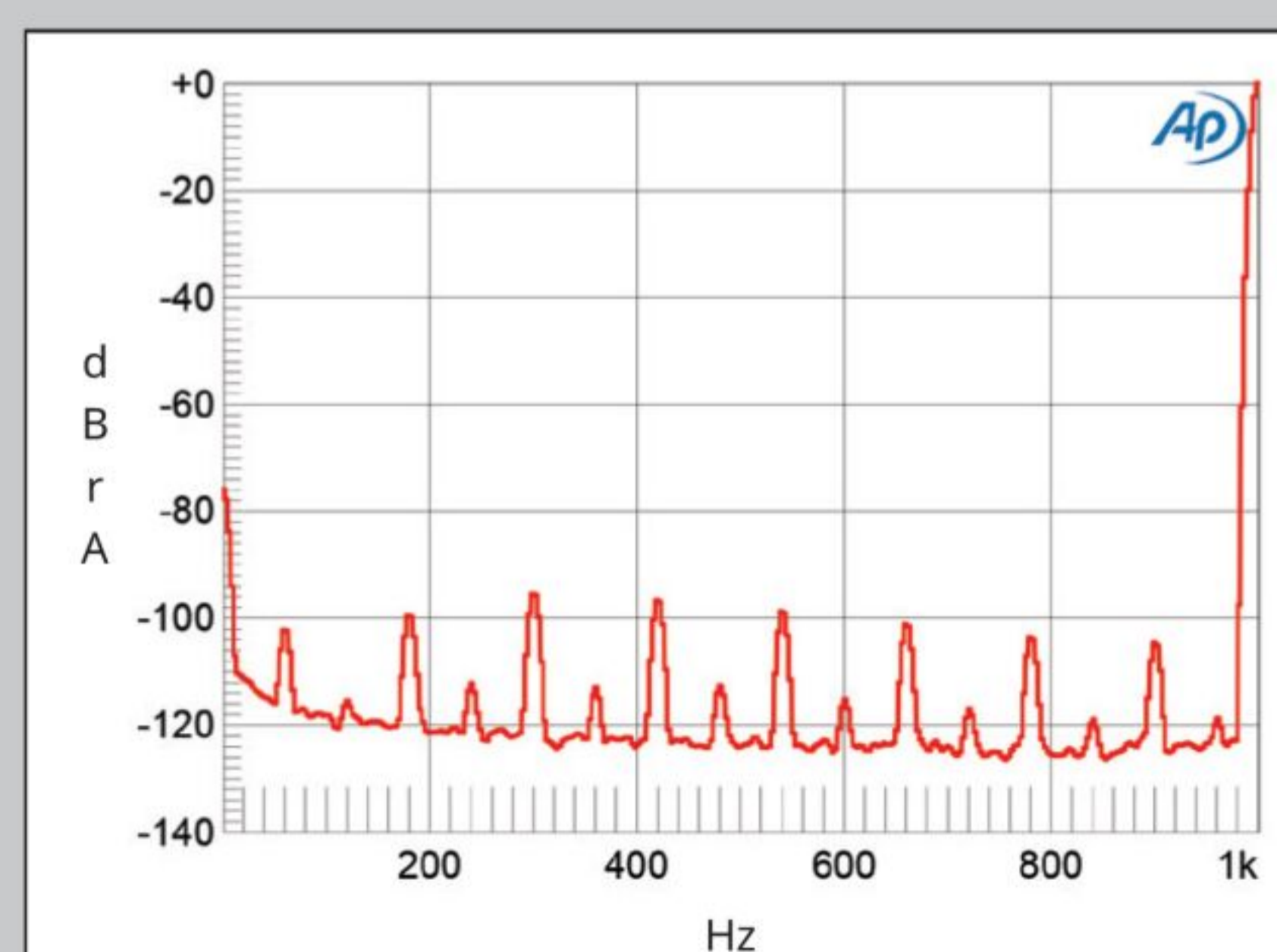


Fig.4 Moon 861, mono mode, spectrum of 1kHz sine wave, DC-1kHz, at 1Wpc into 8 ohms (linear frequency scale).

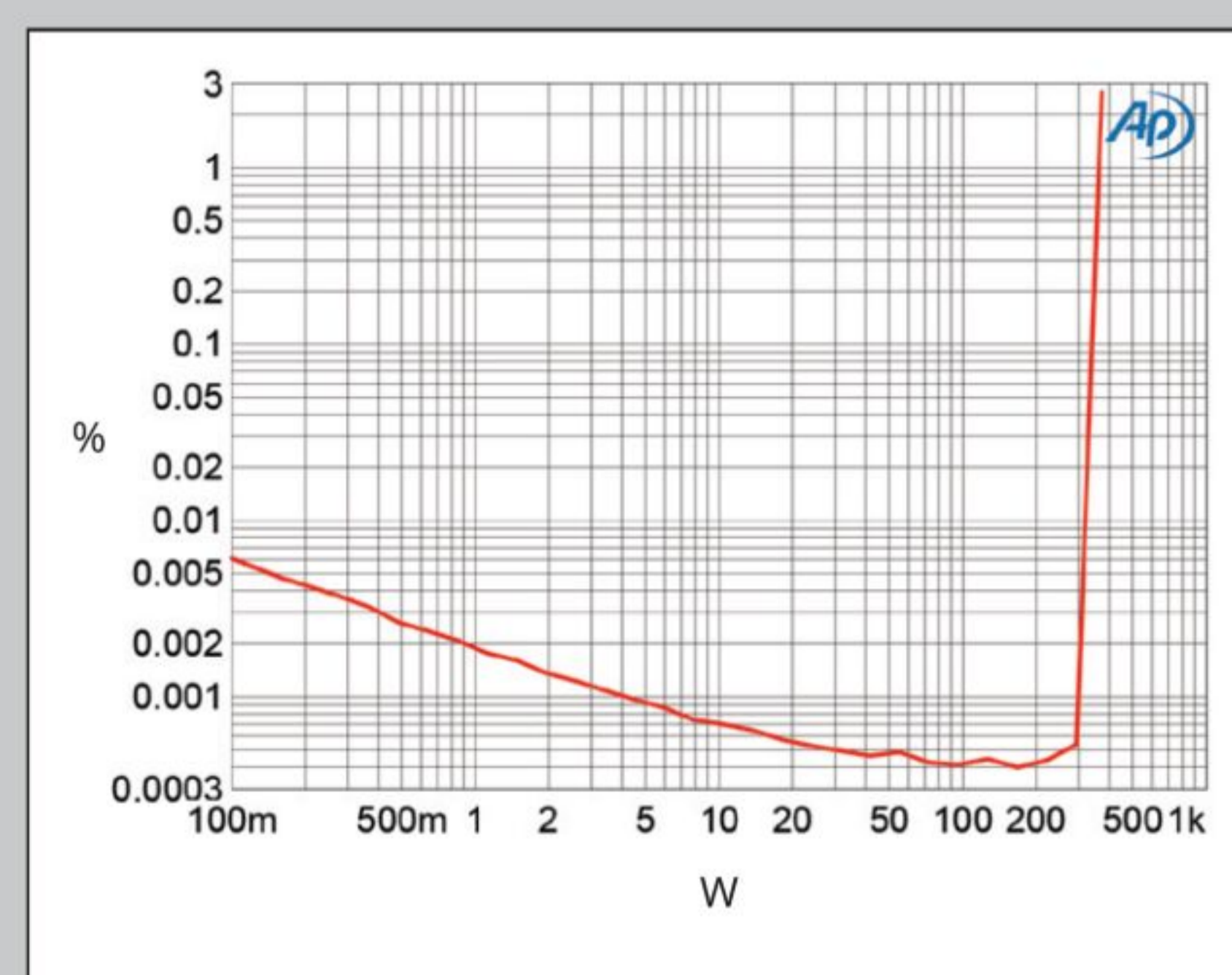


Fig.5 Moon 861, stereo mode, distortion (%) vs 1kHz continuous output power into 8 ohms.

(bridged) toggle switch, 12V trigger in and out, network ports for firmware updates/MOONLink functionality with compatible Moon products/extending the network to an additional device/connecting the device to a network router, low power standby toggle switch, main power rocker switch, and 15A AC input. Moon recommends setting the low power standby toggle switch to “Reg” to reduce the amount of time necessary to reach optimal playing conditions.⁴ “Low” reduces energy consumption when not in use, at the cost of shutting off more of the amplifier and requiring longer warm-up.

The AC/DC coupling switch enables the input to block DC signals. Sayeth the manual: “AC coupling is useful with preamps suspected of outputting DC (due to age or design) or if the amplifier frequently enters DC protection mode.” Koulisakis recommended I keep it in “DC.” I did, and everything worked fine.

The mono (bridged) connection scheme is mostly notated on the rear panel and described in the manual. If you can follow instructions, you can do it fast.

The three faces of 861

Koulisakis and I placed the amps on the floor, warmed them up, and began playing familiar music. The sound was enthralling, initially. As much as we audiophiles frequently cite a “black” back-

ground to describe presentations devoid of electronically induced noise, this was the first time I’ve heard an obsidian black shine between and around each note. As alluring as it was, the shine soon felt artificial, like switching one’s computer screen view from a white background to black.

Against that polished black, colors felt overly hyped—if you’re old enough, think Fujifilm vs Kodak—yet strangely monotoned. As fascinating as the sound was—it seemed perfect for the soundtrack to an AI-generated cinematographic journey into outer space—it sounded little like what I hear in the best acoustic and amplified venues.

Hence, setup scenario #2. Here, the amps’ special feet supported them on thick particle board, which in turn sat on Wilson Pedestals atop my racks’ bamboo shelves. Although the amps were still supported by their own feet, the background switched from polished black to the relative silence I’ve come to expect, and those over-hyped colors were replaced by undersaturated colors of similar timbre. It was as though we’d transitioned from Van Gogh “Starry Night” wonder to aesthetically shortchanged ghetto landscape gray. The presentation may have sounded more natural, but it was less than maximally involving.

⁴ Warm-up can take as little as a half hour if listening room temperature and conditions are optimal.

measurements, continued

Simaudio specifies the Moon 861’s maximum power in stereo mode as 300Wpc into 8 ohms and 600Wpc into 4 ohms, both powers equivalent to 24.77dBW. With our usual definition of clipping, which is when the THD+noise reaches 1%, the 861 exceeded the specified power with both 20Hz and 1kHz signals. With both channels driven, it clipped at these frequencies at 360Wpc into 8 ohms (25.56dBW, fig.5) and 650Wpc into 4 ohms (25dBW, fig.6). The clipping power into 8 ohms with a 20kHz signal was only slightly lower than that at lower frequencies, at 350Wpc (25.44dBW). With one channel driven, the 861 clipped at 1020W into 2 ohms (24.1dBW; not shown).

In mono mode, the Moon 861 clipped at 1150W into 8 ohms (30.6dBW, fig.7), which is 1.6dBW higher than the specified 800W into this load, this despite the AC wall voltage, 119V with the amplifier idling, sagging to 114.9V with the amplifier at full power. Simaudio specifies the maximum power in mono mode into 4 ohms as 1400W (28.45dBW). When I examined the 4 ohm power, the amplifier went into protection at 1000W (27dBW), the white light at the top of the front panel flashing for a short while before the amplifier turned off.

I waited a few minutes, then turned the amplifier on again and examined how the percentage of THD+N in stereo mode varied with frequency at 20V, which is equivalent to 50W into 8 ohms, 100W into 4 ohms, and 200W into 2 ohms (fig.8). The THD+N was very low in the bass and

midrange into all three loads and rose only slightly in the top audio octaves. This implies that the circuit has a wide open-circuit bandwidth.⁴ In mono mode at 28.3V—equivalent to 100W into 8 ohms and 200W into 4 ohms—the THD+N percentage was

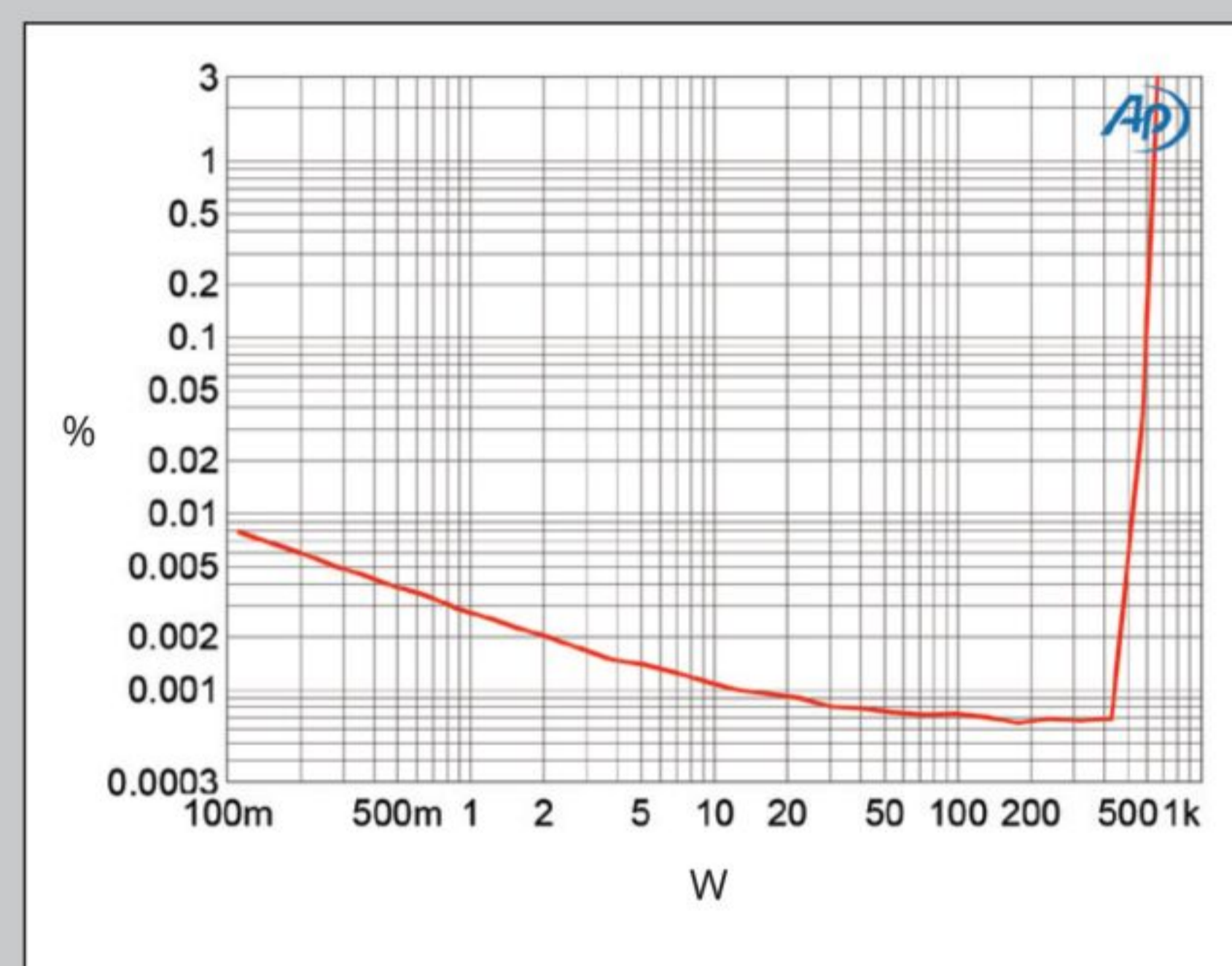


Fig.6 Moon 861, stereo mode, distortion (%) vs 1kHz continuous output power into 4 ohms.

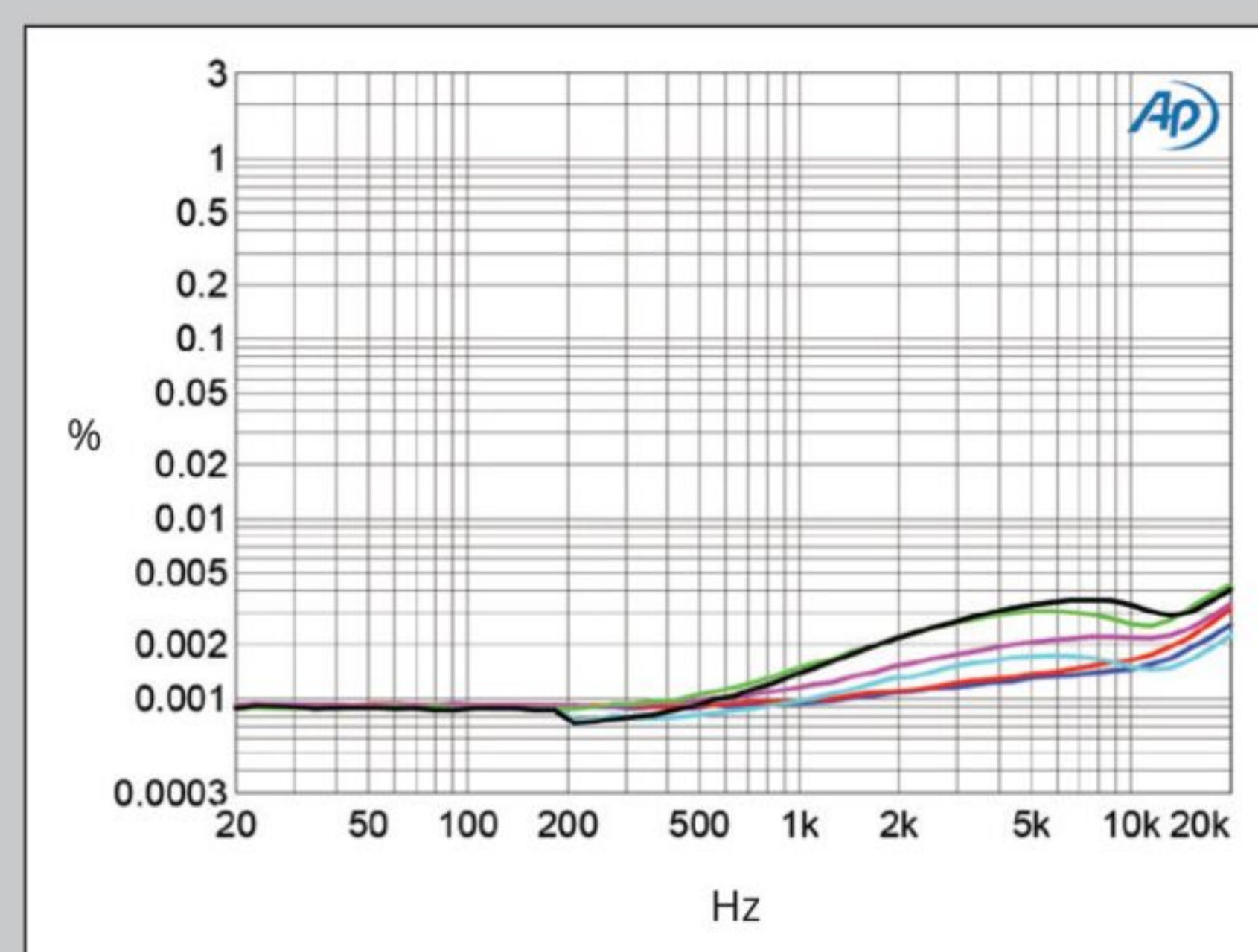


Fig.8 Moon 861, stereo mode, THD+N (%) vs frequency at 20V into: 8 ohms (left channel blue, right red), 4 ohms (left cyan, right magenta), and 2 ohms (left green, right gray).

slightly higher into 8 ohms than it had been in stereo mode, with a small rise at the top of the audioband (fig.9, blue trace).

⁴ See fig.3 at stereophile.com/content/future-without-feedback-page-4. Also note that the 861 is said to employ no global feedback.

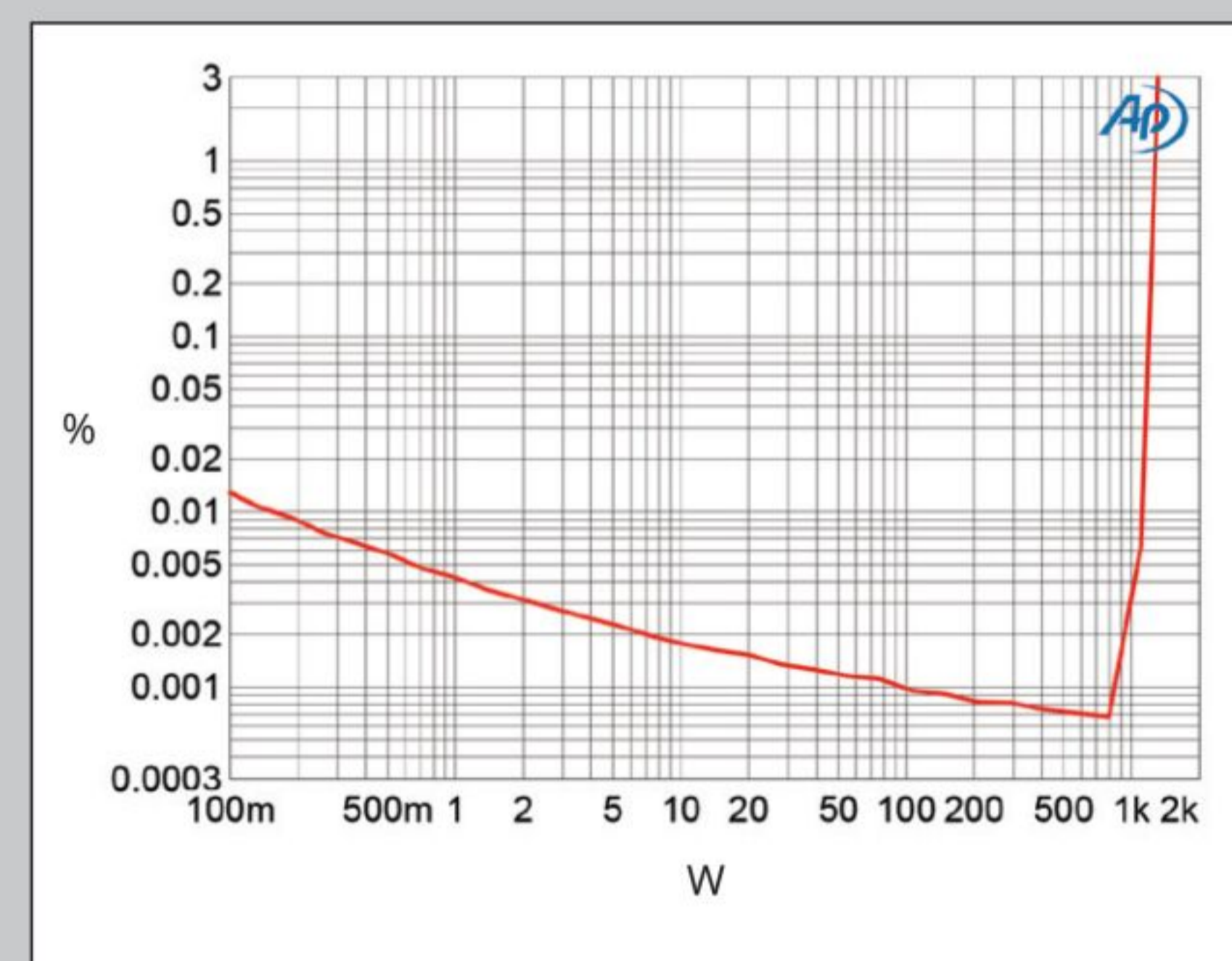


Fig.7 Moon 861, mono mode, distortion (%) vs 1kHz continuous output power into 8 ohms.

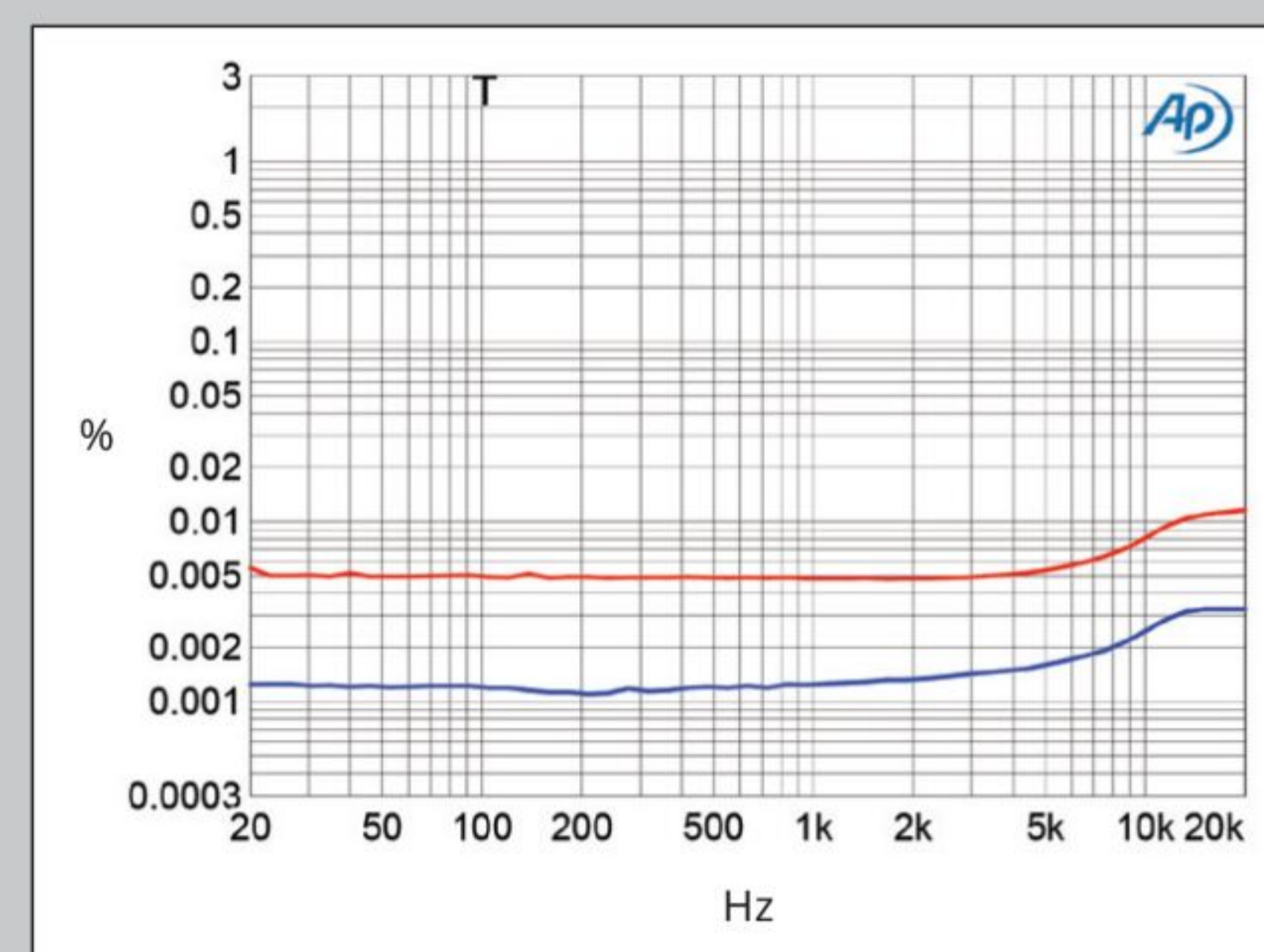


Fig.9 Moon 861, mono mode, THD+N (%) vs frequency at 28.3V into: 8 ohms (blue) and 4 ohms (red).

Damn, thought I. All my components, including my amps, rest on Pedestals perched on my rack's bamboo shelves. How can I replicate that scheme with amps whose dimensions are larger than my amp stands? After much pondering, the way forward became clear. With four Pedestals placed carefully under the 861's heat fins and the amps placed far enough back on the stands to allow all four feet to clear the support pillars (the rear feet extended behind the amp stands), I more or less recreated my usual setup scenario. This produced the most natural and involving sound I'd heard from the Moons so far. All the observations that follow stem from this scenario.

The verdict

With character and personality stabilized—I'm talking about the Moon 861s, not me—I could finally sit back and enjoy. The job of reviewing isn't nearly as luxurious as it sounds, especially when it requires, in addition to meticulous setup, switching heavy amplifiers and a frightening number of cables multiple times. But when

everything sounds as good as it can, pleasure takes precedence over pain.

I used the bridged pair of 861s to audition several recordings whose reviews have since appeared in *Stereophile* or *San Francisco Classical Voice*. First up was *The Kurt Weill Album* (24/96 WAV download, Deutsche Grammophon), performed by the Konzerthausorchester Berlin under Joana Mallwitz. Bass was marvelous, totally right in every respect. Images had impressive weight and focus, and soundstage size was everything I could wish for.



measurements, continued

It was almost 5× higher at the same voltage into 4 ohms (red trace) but was still very low in absolute terms.

The distortion waveform in stereo mode was predominantly the second harmonic (fig.10), at a negligible -110dB (0.0003%) ref. 50W into 8 ohms (fig.11). While higher-order harmonics are present, these all lie at or below -120dB (0.0001%). The third harmonic was the highest in level in mono mode,⁵ but even into 4 ohms lay at just -90dB ref. 200W (0.003%, fig.12). Intermodulation distortion was also very low, the 1kHz difference product resulting from an equal mix of 19 and 20kHz tones at 50Wpc peak into 8 ohms lying at just -120dB in stereo mode (not shown), rising just 6dB at the same voltage into 4 ohms (fig.13). Even with the same signal at 28.3V into 4 ohms in mono mode, the intermodulation products were not significantly higher in level (not shown).

The Moon 861 exceeds its high specified powers in both stereo and mono modes and offers extremely low distortion and noise, even into low impedances. This is superb measured performance for a power amplifier, one of the best I have encountered.—John Atkinson

⁵ When two output stages are bridged, this tends to cancel even-order distortion.

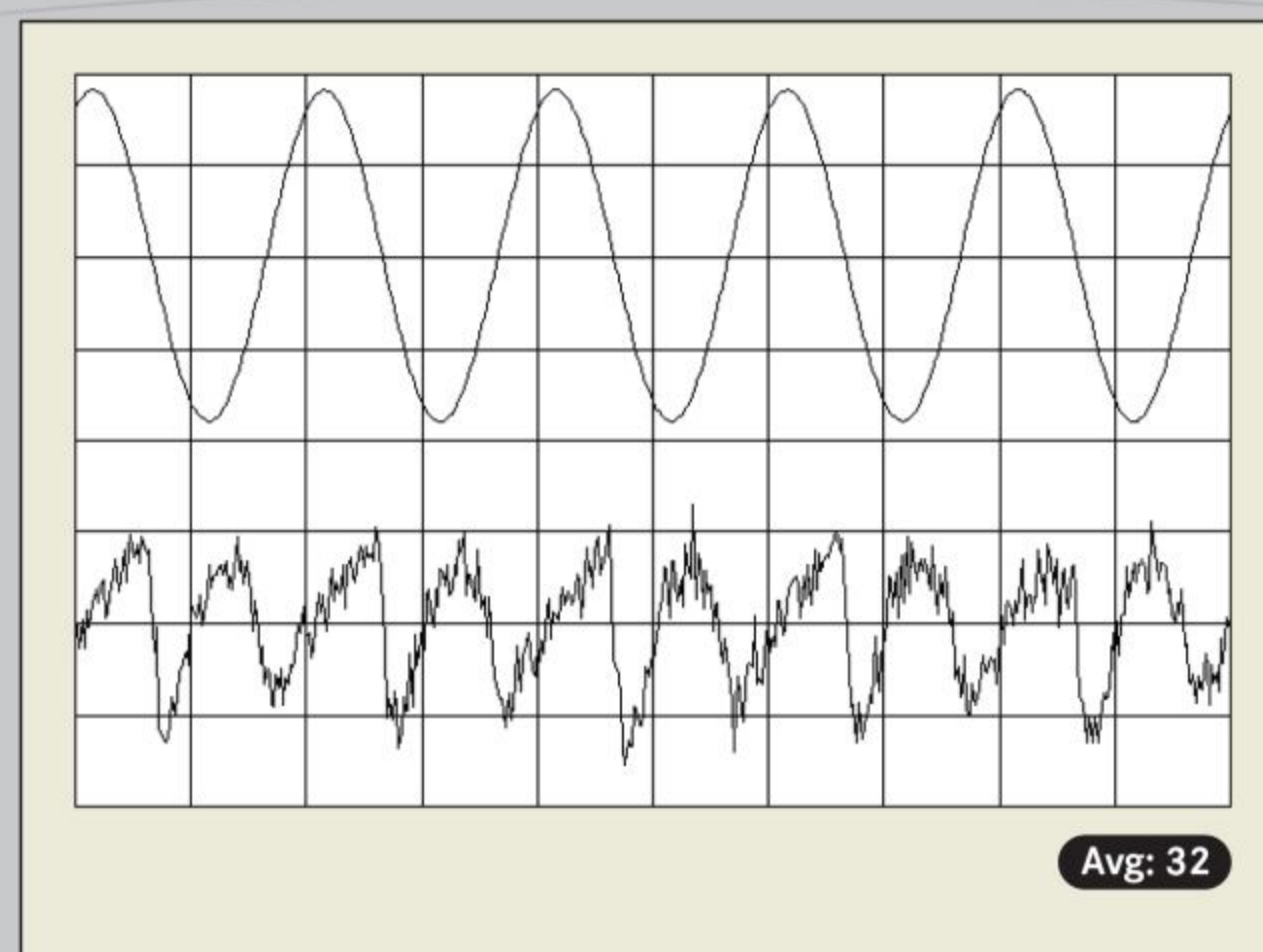


Fig.10 Moon 861, stereo mode, 1kHz waveform at 50W into 8 ohms, 0.0008% THD+N (top); distortion and noise waveform with fundamental notched out (bottom, not to scale).

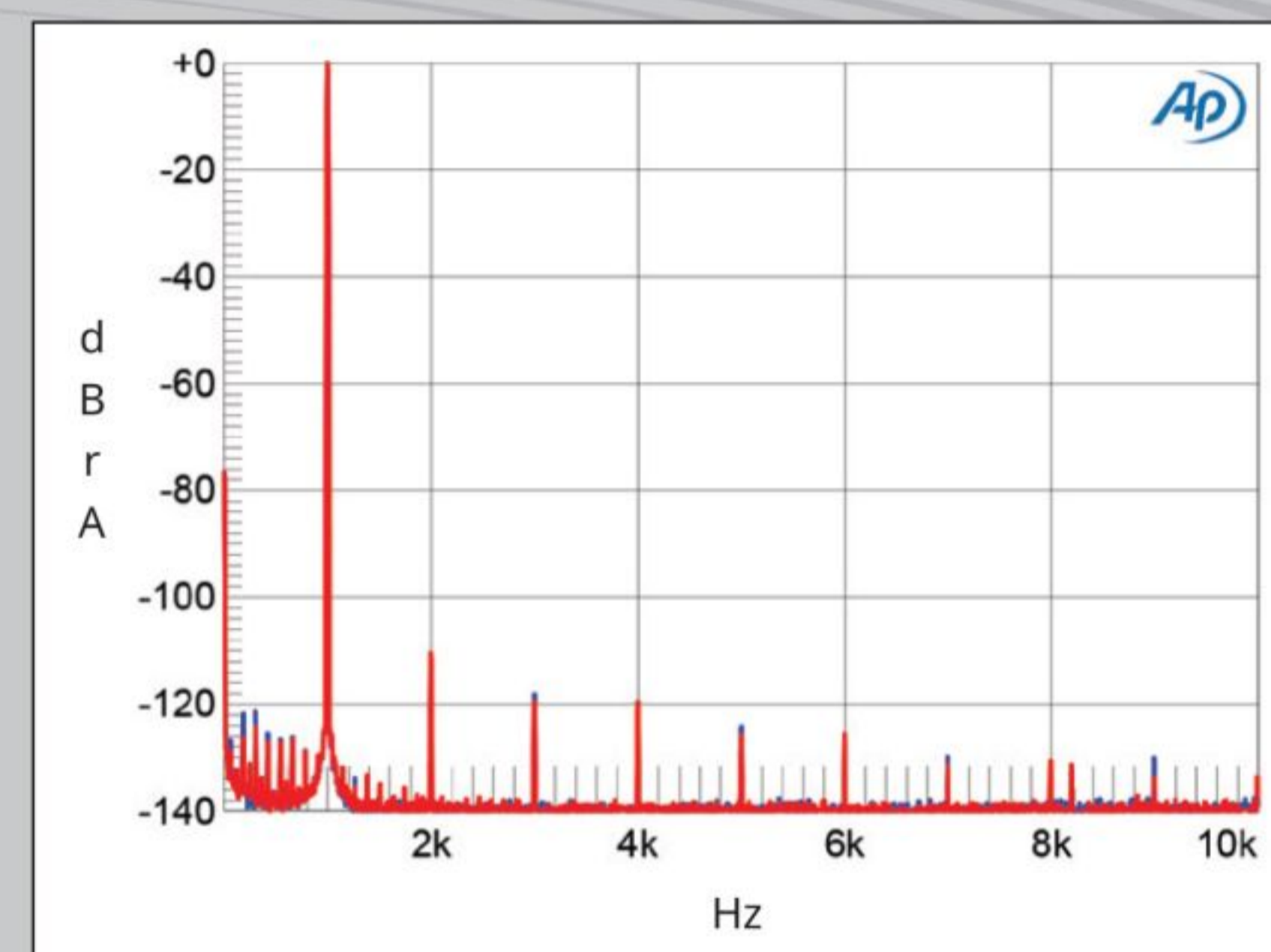


Fig.11 Moon 861, stereo mode, spectrum of 1kHz sine wave, DC-10kHz, at 50Wpc into 8 ohms (left channel blue, right red; linear frequency scale).

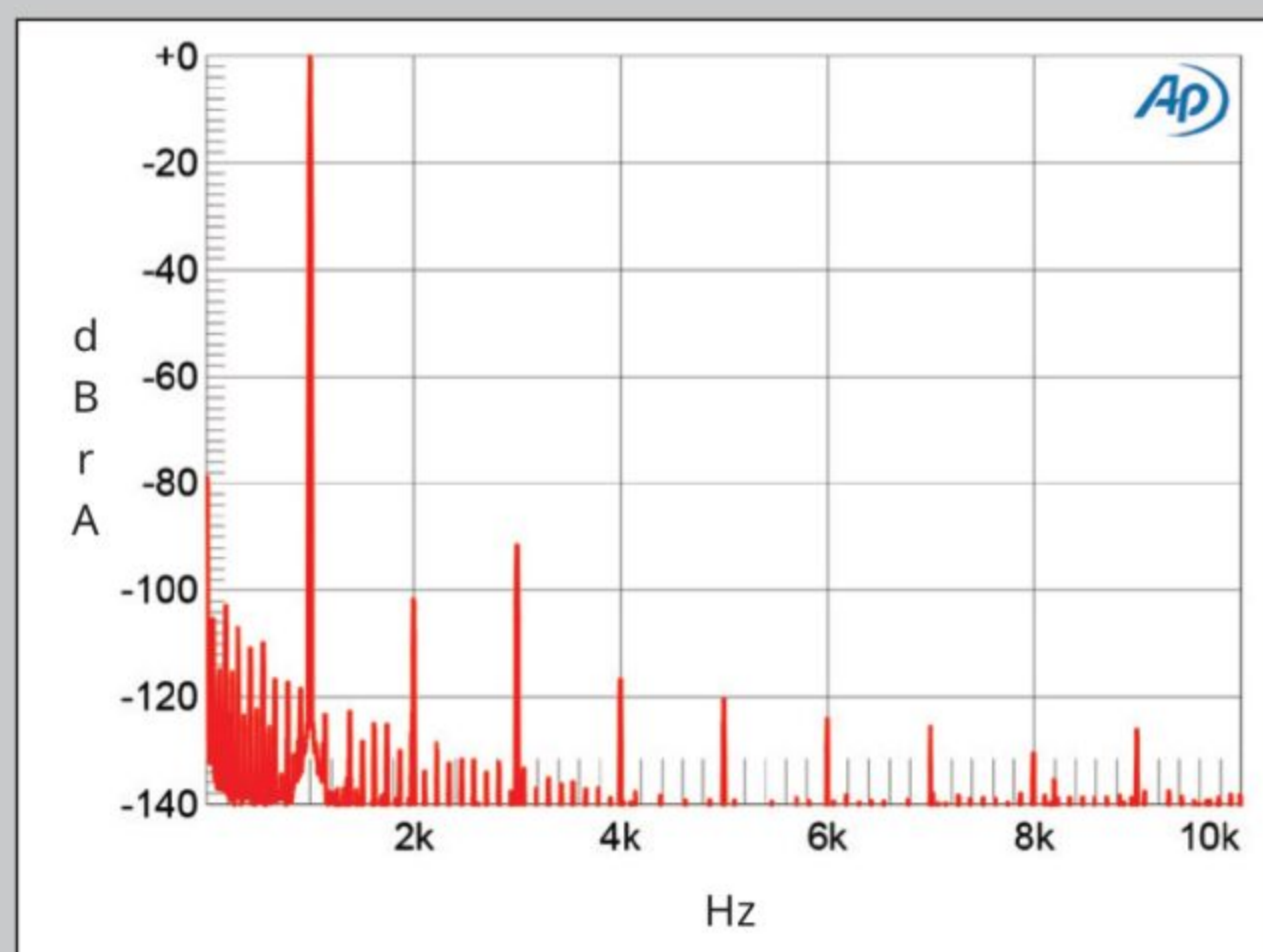


Fig.12 Moon 861, mono mode, spectrum of 1kHz sine wave, DC-10kHz, at 200W into 4 ohms (linear frequency scale).

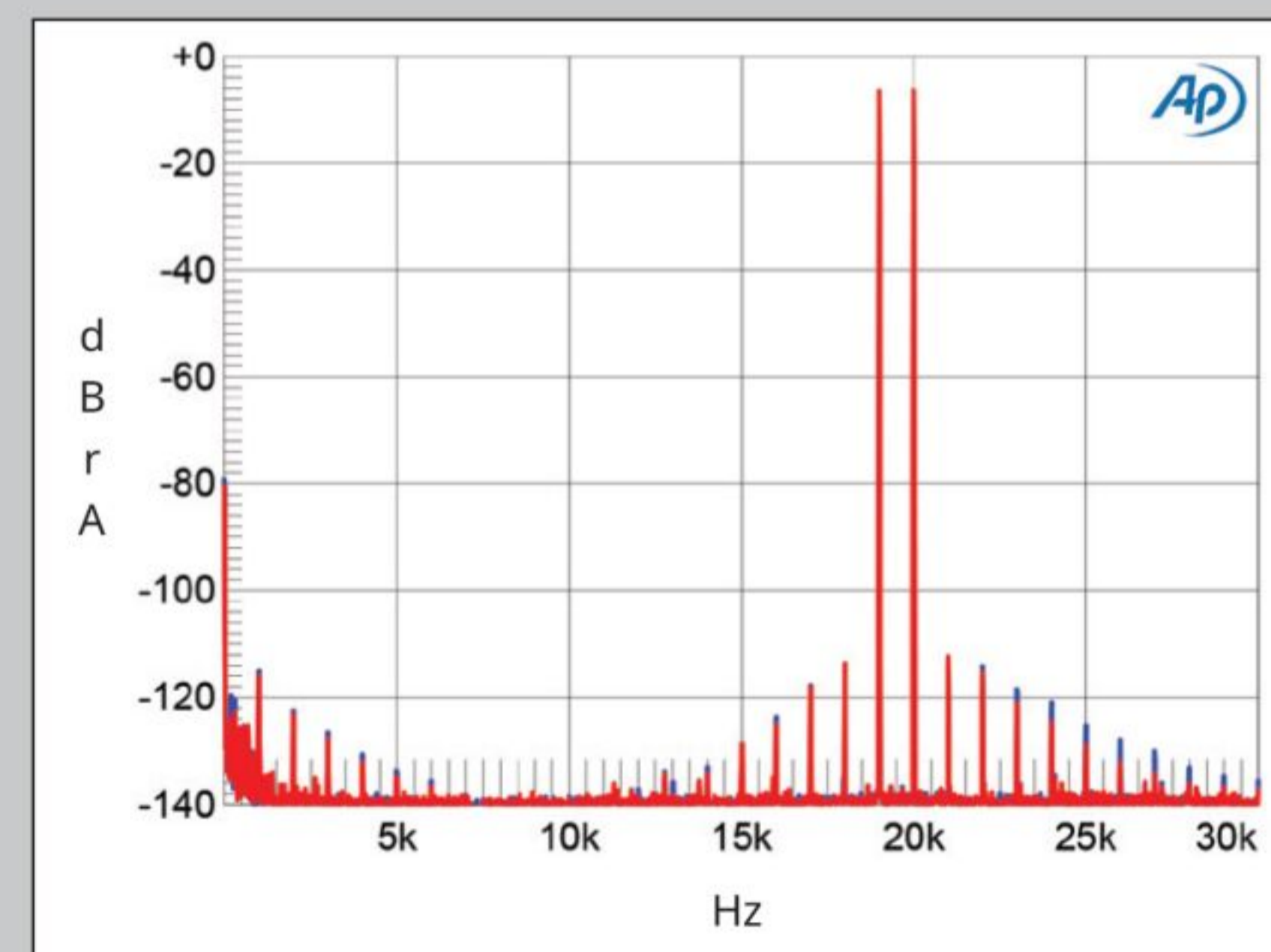


Fig.13 Moon 861, stereo mode, HF intermodulation spectrum, DC-30kHz, 19+20kHz at 60W peak into 4 ohms (left channel blue, right red; linear frequency scale).

Equally important (or perhaps more important depending on your point of view), Weill's and Mallwitz's musical intent came through clearly.

The discord, alarm, and disconsolate interludes of Weill's Symphony No.1 were intense and potent. I heard a huge contrast in musical development and language between the relatively early First Symphony and the other two Weill works on the recording, *The Seven Deadly Sins* and the equally gripping Symphony No.2. I was especially taken by the emotional import of Katharine Mehring's grittily alluring instrument and three-dimensional personality. Listening to this album through the 861s transported me from the mostly even flow of life in Port Townsend to the Kingdom of Major Wow.

When friend Scott and I returned to one of his favorite standbys, Ike Quebec's "Minor Impulse" from *Blue and Sentimental* (24/192 FLAC, Blue Note/Qobuz), we were both taken by the solidity of images and lovely warmth in the middle of notes. Colors were markedly less pronounced than through the fabulous Burmester 218 amplifiers in bridged mono configuration (\$100,000 total), but the Burmesters cost more than twice the price of two Moon 861s.

Turning to another recording I reviewed, Igor Levit's *Brahms: Concertos for Piano and Orchestra Nos 1 & 2, Works for Solo Piano Opp 116-119*, with the Vienna Philharmonic under Christian Thielemann (24/96 FLAC download, Sony), I hung on every note as Levit sensitively performed the most delicate of the solo works. The fragility of Intermezzo No.1 in E-flat Major, Op.117, drove me to write "GORGEOUS!" in my notes. Again and again, I found myself swept away by Levit's playing as the pair of bridged 861s laid bare Brahms's emotional core and his messenger's sympathetic response.

For excitement, expanse, and multiple wild rides, you can't do much better than *Dalia's Mixtape* (mixed resolution FLAC download, Platoon), the new recording from conductor Dalia Stasevska and the BBC Symphony Orchestra. This recording, filled with music by some of today's most trendy classical/new music composers, is available to stream in immersive format through Apple Music, but I much prefer the illusion and depth of two-channel stereo to artificially hyped reality. Besides, in my admittedly lively room, the Moon 861s enabled good old two-channel hi-rez to assume 3D proportions.

Dalia's Mixtape contains a number of slow, touching composi-

tions; Noriko Koide's *Swaddling Silk and Gossamer Rain*, which traces the short life of a silkworm in 11 minutes, and the late Johann Johannsson's elegiac "They Being Dead Yet Speaketh" from *Miners' Hymns* are two of the most outstanding. In contrast, the insistent, pulsating, thrilling, ominous start of the opening track, Anna Meredith's "Nautilus," finds its complement in the final track, Julia Wolfe's fabulous, deceptively titled "Pretty." For an equally pounding overdrive workout, you'll have to turn to raucous rock or aggressive jazz. Think 50 Nina Simones pounding "Mississippi Goddam" through your skull while you shoot over Niagara Falls.

The bridged pair of Moon 861s handled every challenge this recording of 20th and 21st century music threw at it. While colors were neither as saturated nor as differentiated as those heard through some costlier amps, the bridged pair of Moon 861 power amplifiers' power, drive, impact, and even balance top to bottom impressed me greatly.

Sentencing

During the only listening session I was able to schedule with Scott while the 861s were in place, I asked, "What other amps have I reviewed near the price of this bridged pair of Moon 861 stereo amps that were anywhere near as good?" Neither of us could come up with an answer. The wonderful sounding, beautifully colored Octave MRE 220 SE tube monoblocks (\$37,100/pair with all their options) are gems, but they lack the weight and oomph of a pair of bridged 861s. A pair of Accuphase A-300s (\$51,900 for two) don't cost that much more, but their sound is markedly different. The Krell KMA-i800 monoblocks are superb in many ways, but their far warmer presentation, bass heft, and dynamic impact will set you back at least \$29,000 more. The D'Agostino Momentum M400s are in a class of their own and considerably more expensive. After scrolling back through several years of my reviews, I could not find a similarly priced amplifier whose overall sound is as neutral and balanced as the 861's and whose bass, soundstaging, and dynamics will cause eyes, ears, and wallet to open wide.

Paired with equipment of comparable value, I believe that a bridged pair of Moon 861 stereo amplifiers will deliver reward after reward and thrill after thrill. If other amplifiers in their price range can deliver experiences as involving, satisfying, and emotionally potent, I have yet to hear them. Most highly recommended. ■

ASSOCIATED EQUIPMENT

Digital sources dCS Vivaldi Apex DAC, Vivaldi Upsampler Plus, and Vivaldi Master Clock; Innuos Statement Next-Gen Music Server and PhoenixNET network switch; Ideon Absolute Stream Meta Edition (2024) music server and Alpha Wave; Small Green Computer Sonore opticalModule Deluxe (2); Broadcom/Avago AFBR-5718PZ 1GB SX-SFP, Gen 5 Fiber Optic modules; Nordost QSource linear power supply (2); Sonore Audiophile Linear Power Supply; Synology 5-bay 1019+ NAS with Ferrum Hypsos linear/switching hybrid power supply; Linksys MR9000 mesh router and Arris modem; Apple 2023 iPad Pro and 2017 MacBook Pro laptop

Power amplifiers Dan D'Agostino Momentum M400 MxV, Accuphase A-300.

Preamplifier Dan D'Agostino Relentless.

Loudspeakers Wilson Audio Specialties Alexia V with Løke subwoofers.

Cables Digital: Nordost Odin 1, Odin 2, and Valhalla 2 (USB and Ethernet), Frey 2 (USB adapter); AudioQuest WEL Signature; Wireworld Platinum Starlight Cat8 (Ethernet), OM1 62.5/125 multimode duplex (fiber optic). Interconnect (XLR): Nordost Odin 2 and Blue Heaven subwoofer, AudioQuest Dragon, Canare (subwoofers). Speaker: Nordost Odin 2, AudioQuest Dragon. AC: Nordost Odin 2, Valhalla 2, Valhalla 1; AudioQuest Dragon and Firebird; Kimber PK10 Palladian. Umbilical cords: Ghent Audio Canare on NAS; QSource Premium DC cables with Lemo terminations for QSourcesoT.

Accessories Grand Prix Monza 8-shelf double rack and amp stands, 1.5" Formula platform; Symposium Ultra Platform; Nordost 20A QB8 Mark III, QKore 1 and 6; Titanium and Bronze Sort Kones, Sort Lifts; Stromtank S-4000 MK II XT power generator, SEQ-5 Audio Distribution Bar; AudioQuest Niagara 7000 and 5000 power conditioners, NRG Edison outlets; Environmental Potentials EP2050EE surge protector/filter; Wilson Audio Pedestals; A/V RoomService Polyflex Diffusers; Resolution Acoustics room treatment; Stillpoints Clouds (8); HRS DPX-14545 Damping Plates; Marigo Aida CD mat.

Listening room 20' L × 16'4" W × 9'4" H.
—Jason Victor Serinus