

MICHAEL FREMER

Moon by Simaudio 888

MONOBLOCK POWER AMPLIFIER

Not everyone needs a power amplifier that can deliver 888W RMS into 8 ohms or 1776W into 4 ohms. You could say that *no one* needs one of these—or two, if you want to listen in stereo. Most household AC systems can't even provide enough current to deliver all that power. But Simaudio does build Moon 888 monoblocks, and people do buy them, whether or not they need an amp that weighs about 250 lb each and costs \$118,888/pair.

But forget about *need*. Would you *want* a pair of these massively heavy amps? People into tubed gear might not, but if price was not a consideration and if you had the room, chances are good that the rest of you would. After listening to a pair in my listening room, I did.

Some months ago, Costa Koulisakis, Vice President—Customer Experience and part owner of Simaudio Ltd., rolled two Moon 888s into my ground-level listening room and, with great difficulty, lifted each off its dolly and plopped both down on my carpeted cement floor. While setting a powerful audio amplifier directly atop carpet is not usually advised, Koulisakis assured me that it would be safe. Each amp's four big, spring-loaded, self-leveling feet rose to the occasion.

When the Moon 888s were in place, Koulisakis removed the top panel of one of them and gave me a tour. I shot a video of it.¹

Inside and Out

The Moon 888 is big—22" wide by 14" high by 27" deep—and its construction quality is heroic. It's so sturdily built that I could safely stand atop one to replace a ceiling lightbulb. (Don't tell anyone at Simaudio I did that.) The large, extremely heavy top panel is made of cast aluminum, its



The Moon 888 is big, and its construction quality is heroic.

underside ribbed for extra pleasure—I mean, extra strength—and covered in a vibration-deadening paint.

The cleanly laid-out rear panel offers two sets of easily accessed speaker terminals for biwiring. Below these are single-ended (RCA) and balanced (XLR) inputs (I ran balanced exclusively), a switch for choosing between them, and another switch for selecting AC or DC coupling (see below). Below those are an RS-232 port for automation and updates, a 12V trigger input and output, a 20A IEC power inlet, a fuse, the power switch, and three warning lights, labeled Thermal, DC Level, and Other.

Each side panel is actually a single large heatsink com-

¹ Watch my video of Koulisakis's guided tour of the Moon 888's interior on AnalogPlanet.com's YouTube channel: <https://youtu.be/Lc8Bo9VZJeI>.

SPECIFICATIONS

Description Solid-state, class-AB, monoblock power amplifier. Inputs: 1 unbalanced (RCA), 1 balanced (XLR). Outputs: 2 pairs speaker binding posts (biwirable). Power output: 888W into 8 ohms (31dBW), 1776W into 4 ohms (31dBW). Frequency

response: 10Hz–200kHz, +0/–3dB. Voltage gain: 31dB. THD: <0.04%, 20Hz–20kHz at 888W. Signal/noise: >120dB (full power). Input impedance: 24k ohms. I/M distortion: 0.0006%. Power consumption: 50W at idle. **Dimensions** 22" (559mm) W by 14" (356mm) H by 27"

(686mm) D. Weight: 300 lb (136kg) shipping.

Finishes Black & silver (two-tone) standard. Custom finishes available.

Serial numbers of units reviewed T10337070 & '71.

Price \$118,888/pair. Approximate number of dealers: 50. Warranty: 10

years parts and labor, upon product registration.

Manufacturer Simaudio Ltd., 1345 Newton Road, Boucherville, Quebec J4B 5H2, Canada. Tel: (450) 449-2212. US: Simaudio Ltd., 2002 Ridge Road, Champlain, NY 12919. Web: www.simaudio.com.

prising not a series of bolted-together sections but a single aluminum casting. Simaudio claims that this dissipates heat more evenly, to ensure that all 32 bipolar transistors in this fully balanced, dual-differential amp consistently run at the same temperature. This casting includes a series of channels and indentations designed to control vibrations. Every other part of the case and chassis is machined from aluminum.

If you watch my video you'll see that high-quality parts are used throughout the 888. The two large, custom-wound transformers have been potted inside large chromed cylinders. The 12 big, custom-made power-supply capacitors in the main storage bank have a total capacity of 324,000 μ F, augmented by secondary and tertiary storage caps, including one next to the output transistors, for a total of just over 400,000 μ F—not surprising in an amplifier claimed to double its already impressive specified output each time the impedance is halved.

The Moon 888 can be AC or DC coupled via a switch on its rear panel. Simaudio says that DC coupling produces less phase distortion and thus better bass resolution. However, despite the 888's sensitive DC-detection circuitry and proprietary DC servo, any amount of DC amplified to full power by the 888 would spell certain doom for any speaker hooked up to it. So while Simaudio recommends setting this switch to DC when using a Moon preamplifier, they urge caution when using preamps made by other brands, when AC coupling should be used. I ran the 888s DC-coupled without incident, first using a darTZeel NHB-18NS preamplifier, then a CH Precision L1.

Simaudio themselves make every major part of this amplifier, other than the two pairs of large, clutched, rhodium speaker terminals, which are made in Japan by Furutech. When the speaker cable has been sufficiently tightened, the clutch slips, to ensure a secure fit and prevent you from

overtightening the connection and possibly even breaking something.

According to Costa Koulisakis, when a Moon 888's subassemblies have been finished, the amp is then hand-assembled by a team that then does nothing else until that amp is finished. He told me that it takes about a week to assemble one 888.

Simaudio sent me a white paper explaining the origins of the Moon 888. Evidently the model had been "brewing" in the engineering quarters for at least a decade, but "reality" and "marketing pressures" dictated that Simaudio first develop more affordable products. Over the past three years, however, Simaudio claims it has seen products "emerge in the marketplace with exorbitant price tags," many from unknown "start-ups" whose futures are equally unknown. Meanwhile, throughout the past decade, all of the costliest and "tweaky-ist" sound-improving ideas Simaudio has been unable to implement in its more affordable products were thrown into what it calls its "skunkworks closet," in the hope that someday that closet could be emptied and the ideas therein put to good use.

Ultimately, while many if not most of the skunkworks ideas went into the design of the Moon 888, Simaudio chose a generally conservative route, including eschewing a new look in favor of something that would better match the company's other products. Rather than use a new and "revolutionary" circuit design, the company stuck with its proven amplifier technology, but greatly augmented it with reference-quality, no-expense-spared parts.

Their idea seems to be: If you like the Moon 330A stereo power amp, you'll probably love the stereo Moon 860A—and if you love *that*, you'll *really* love the Moon 880M monoblock. And if you really love *that*, more likely than not you'll want to toss the Moon 888 in your bed and sleep with

MEASUREMENTS

Because, in its flight case, each Moon by Simaudio 888 amplifier weighs 300 lb, I drove my Audio Precision SYS2722 system (see the January 2008 "As We See It"¹), with its host PC, monitor, test loads, and cables, to Mikey's place, rather than try to get one to my place and down the stairs from the front door to my basement test lab. We manhandled one 888 onto a dolly and wheeled it into Mikey's garage, where I set up my gear. Because the outlets in his garage weren't up to the amplifier's current demands, we ran a long, heavy-duty extension cord to one of the 20A outlets in his house.

Usually, before performing any measurements, I precondition an amplifier by running it for an hour at one-third its measured maximum power into 8 ohms—thermally, the worst case for an amplifier with a class-AB output stage. Time constraints—I needed to hit the road for the 45-mile drive home before

the Friday-evening rush hour—meant that I had to cut the preconditioning period to 20 minutes. By the end of that time, the Moon 888's top panel was barely warm, at 78.4°F (25.8°C); the side-mounted heatsinks were hotter, at 109.6°F (43.1°C).

The voltage gain at 1kHz into 8 ohms using the balanced input was slightly higher than the specified 31dB, at 32dB. For the unbalanced input the gain was 29dB, 3dB lower than the balanced gain rather than the expected 6dB. The amplifier was non-inverting (*ie*, it preserved absolute polarity) with both inputs. Its balanced input impedance was 32k ohms at 20Hz and 1kHz, dropping to the specified 24k ohms at 20kHz. The unbalanced input impedance was 16k ohms at 20Hz and 1kHz, but 10k ohms at 20kHz.

The Moon 888's output impedance, including 6' of speaker cable, was very low, at 0.03 ohm at 20Hz and 1kHz, rising to 0.085 ohm at 20kHz. The

modulation of the amplifier's frequency response, due to the Ohm's law interaction between this source impedance and the impedance of our standard simulated loudspeaker,² was therefore minimal (fig.1, gray trace). Into an 8 ohm resistive load (fig.1, blue trace), the

1 See www.stereophile.com/asweseeit/108aws/i/index.html.

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

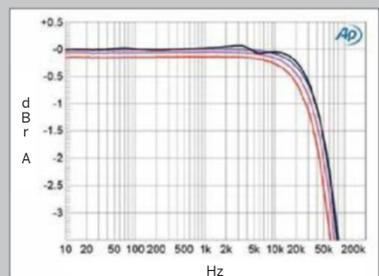


Fig.1 Moon 888, frequency response at 2.83V into: simulated loudspeaker load (gray), 8 ohms (blue), 4 ohms (magenta), 2 ohms (red) (0.5dB/vertical div.).

it before installing it.²

Simaudio admits that the Moon 888's model number—and, I guess, its price per pair of \$118,888—is pure marketing: In Asia, the number 8 represents good fortune. In fact, the amp can supposedly output 888W RMS into 8 ohms. The 888's core circuit technology is taken directly from Simaudio's Moon 880M monoblock, which sells for \$45,000/pair, but with "cost is no object" parts and implementation. Circuit features include zero global feedback, and only local feedback stages. Simaudio claims that they've been continuously refining their use of zero global feedback since 1986. They say it results in superbly stable amplifiers and, perhaps of equal or more importance, when properly implemented it offers superior phase characteristics and top-end clarity, which in turn result in bigger soundstages with more ambience, and more air around instruments and voices.

Another of the Moon 888's novel features, also from the skunkworks closet, is referred to by Simaudio as a "harmonized electro-mechanical output": The cast-aluminum heatsink is designed so that the output section is fully inset *within* it rather than being bolted on to the heatsink's outer surface. This results in the most efficient conduction of heat, aided by a large thermal pad between the output board and heatsink that draws heat away from all circuit-board components. The results, per Simaudio, are lower and more stable



operating temperatures, and thus improved linearity and less distortion due to heat, which all adds up to higher sound quality.

Although the class-AB Moon 888 consumes a relatively low 50W at idle, its prodigious power output and linear power supply mean that it won't be the most energy-efficient device in your home. It has two standby modes: Low Power and Default. Though Low Power powers down all but the logic circuit, Simaudio recommends using Default mode, in which the gain stages remain active. This maintains the 888's ideal operating temperature: it's always ready to play, without warmup. Whether your concern is environmental or financial—the latter is

unlikely, if you're dropping \$118,888—you're covered.

Sound

The Moon by Simaudio 888s arrived while the Eggleston-Works Viginti speakers were still in my system.³ I'd spent a few weeks listening to the Vigintis as driven by the darTZeel NHB-458 monoblocks⁴ and taken lots of notes. Within a

² If you think that's far-fetched, back in the 1960s I knew a guy so in love with his Corvette that, after it was totaled, he slept with its engine. Name and occupation available on request.

³ See www.stereophile.com/content/egglestonworks-viginti-loudspeaker.

⁴ See www.stereophile.com/content/dartzeeel-nhb-458-monoblock-amplifier.

measurements, continued

Simaudio's response was flat almost up to 20kHz, then rolled off to reach -3dB at 70kHz rather than the specified 200kHz. The response rolled off a little earlier into lower impedances.

A rear-panel switch allows the amplifier to be operated with DC or AC input coupling. The DC response was flat down to 10Hz (fig.2, blue trace); the AC response began to roll off in the low bass, reaching -1dB around 15Hz (red trace). The amplifier's reproduction of

a 10kHz squarewave into 8 ohms was commendably free from overshoot and ringing (fig.3).

The Moon 888's unweighted, wide-band signal/noise ratio, ref. 1W into 8 ohms and taken with the input shorted to ground, was 75.2dB. This improved to an excellent 87.3dB when the measurement bandwidth was restricted to the audioband, and to 89.8dB when the measurement was A-weighted. Spurious were present in the amplifier's

noise floor at the 60Hz power-supply frequency and its odd harmonic, but these all lay at or below -106dB ref. 1W into 8 ohms (0.0005%, fig.4).

As its name suggests, the Moon 888 is specified as delivering a staggering 888W into 8 ohms (29.5dBW). Using our definition of clipping—*ie*, when the output's percentage of THD+noise reaches 1%—the amplifier exceeded that output, clipping with a 1kHz signal at 990W into 8 ohms (30dBW, fig.5).

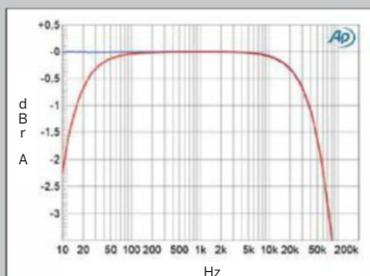


Fig.2 Moon 888, frequency response at 2.83V into 8 ohms with: DC selected (blue), AC selected (red) (0.5dB/vertical div.).

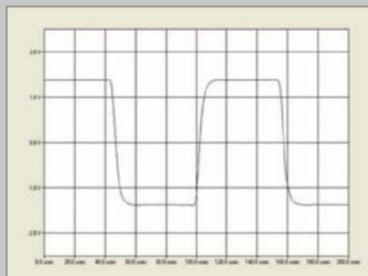


Fig.3 Moon 888, small-signal 10kHz squarewave into 8 ohms.

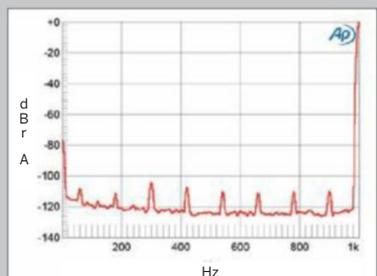


Fig.4 Moon 888, spectrum of 1kHz sinewave, DC-1kHz, at 1W into 8 ohms (linear frequency scale).

few minutes of listening to Vigintis driven by the Moon 888s, I realized that all of my notes had to be tossed out.

For whatever reason(s), the darTZeels weren't able to effectively control or grip the Vigintis' woofers. My notes turned out to be more about the interaction of the darTZeels and EgglestonWorks than about the sound of the speakers themselves. This was yet another reminder that any equipment review, published in *Stereophile* or elsewhere, should be read only as a rough sketch, not a detailed roadmap—even if the reviewer is a navel-gazer intent on telling you just how discerning and particular his listening abilities are. (And don't get me started about seemingly molecular-level reports from hi-fi shows at which demo systems are set up in hotel rooms.) Don't ever forget: Any equipment review is built only on the shaky foundation of the review sample's interactions with the system's other components.

The Moon 888s' grip on the Vigintis' woofers produced a seismic shift in the speakers' sound. I'd been about to write that the EgglestonWorks had somewhat sloppy, underdamped bass. Now, with what was clearly the right amplification, they were producing a far more enjoyable and reasonably well-controlled visceral wallop. But if you prefer tight, polite bass that stays in the box, look elsewhere.

I listened to the Moon 888s driving the Vigintis, my reference Wilson Audio Alexxes, and Sonus Faber's Aidas (review in the works). For whatever reason(s), the Moon 888s sounded most different from the darTZeel NHB-458s with the EgglestonWorks Vigintis. And both amps sounded different, in different ways, from Boulder Amplifiers' big 2150 monoblocks (\$99,000/pair), which I reviewed in February 2017.⁵

The Moon 888 dispelled the myth that high-powered amplifiers are lumbering giants that can't possibly match

the nimbleness of lower-powered ones, and that it's best to match the amp to the speakers so that you don't "overpower" them and thus lose speed and resolution of detail.

The Moon 888 nimbly drove all three speakers, including the Sonus Faber Aida, which is specified as having a sensitivity of 92dB and a nominal impedance of 4 ohms. In other words, it could pump a couple of thousand watts into the Aida—a speaker that in my room needs, on average, probably less than 20W! Yet the Moon 888 drove the Aidas with agility. It was comfortable just loafing along, putting out a few class-A watts.

For much of the time the Moon 888s were in my system, I forgot they were there and went on, listening to music and to other components I was reviewing. Believe me—had the 888s produced homogenized sonic boredom or committed obvious aural sins such as grain, etch, smear, or glare, I'd have heard them. If that's not a strong endorsement of the 888's lack of a sonic signature of any sort, I'm not sure what is. Those who think that a powerhouse amp operating at such low ebb might lose focus would be mistaken.

When my attention at last returned to the Moon 888s, I noted, with familiar recordings, their obvious bottom-end grip. It never sounded mechanical or overdamped, though bass was somewhat tighter than through the darTZeels, which sound more relaxed on the bottom. I also noted the Simaudios' solid, vividly three-dimensional imaging and their ability to produce a big soundstage when the recording contained that information.

4AD Records recently reissued, from high-resolution digital files, the Cocteau Twins' *Head Over Heels* (LP, 4AD/Beggars Banquet CAD 3709), of which I also have an origi-

⁵ See www.stereophile.com/content/boulder-amplifiers-2150-monoblock-power-amplifier.

measurements, continued

The clipping power didn't double when the load was halved, 1300W being delivered at clipping into 4 ohms (28.1dBW, fig.6), but it's fair to note that I didn't hold the wall voltage constant for this test. However, the Moon 888 turned itself off several times during these high-power tests, particularly when I tried (unsuccessfully) to measure the clipping power into 2 ohms.

I examined how the percentage of

THD+N changed with frequency at 20V, which is equivalent to 50W into 8 ohms, 100W into 4 ohms, and 200W into 2 ohms. The THD+N was extremely low in the midrange into 8 and 4 ohms (fig.7, blue and magenta traces), but rose into 2 ohms (red). In this test I sweep a tone from 20kHz down to 20Hz, and you can see that the 2 ohm trace cuts off at 80Hz, which was when the amplifier's protection kicked in.³ This behavior was reminiscent of what

happened when I measured the Bricasti Design M15 amplifier, reviewed in the July issue. I also noticed that when I turned the Moon 888 off and on after one of these incidents, the percentage of THD+N was at first about twice as high as in fig.7; it then took about a minute to drop to the previously mea-

³ I was using the Moon 888s when I measured the spatially averaged frequency responses of the EgglestonWorks Viginti speakers that Michael reviewed in June, and one of the amplifiers went into protection a couple of times then.

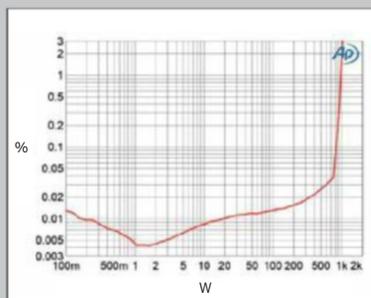


Fig.5 Moon 888, distortion (%) vs 1kHz continuous output power into 8 ohms.

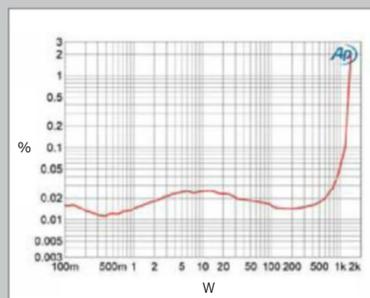


Fig.6 Moon 888, distortion (%) vs 1kHz continuous output power into 4 ohms.

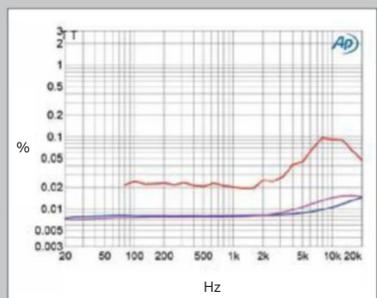


Fig.7 Moon 888, THD+N (%) vs frequency at 20V into: 8 ohms (blue), 4 ohms (magenta), 2 ohms (red).

nal 1983 UK pressing. This Scottish duo of Elizabeth Fraser (vocals) and Robin Guthrie (guitar, bass, drum machine) produced an unusual sound that paved the way for the later shoegazer genre. Other than the deep, explosive bass that begins the album, and other bass accents and effects, *Head Over Heels* sounds as if the mixing engineer used the “echo return” from the board and forgot to include the actual recording—it’s bright, jangly, and echoey. A solid-state amp with a hard or rough-edged sound might produce a homogenized glaze instead of separating and defining the individual bright, airy elements, as well as fail to reproduce this recording’s prodigious artificial depth and spacey three-dimensionality. But the Moon 888s delivered a pristine rendering, preserving and detailing all of the recording’s crystalline threads without smear or glaze. The reissue has deeper, more powerful bass than my 1983 LP, but if all of the original’s top-end ice and shimmer was intended, the reissue loses it, while also managing to homogenize and flatten the original’s spaciousness.

When I reinserted the darTZeel monoblocks in my system, I could still hear these differences, but not as dramatically. The Moon 888s unmasked everything on top without adding high-frequency and/or transient glaze or smear. High-frequency transients were icy when called for, as in *Head Over Heels*—they were cleanly rendered and free of smear and/or grit. And the 888s naturally and convincingly delivered the pluck and warmth of nylon guitar strings, such as those on Leonard Cohen’s *Songs of Leonard Cohen* (LP, Columbia CS 9533) or on your favorite Charlie Byrd album—mine is *Bossa Nova Pelos Passaros* (LP, Riverside RM436/RS9436).

Someone should reissue *Clarinet Summit*, by clarinetists Alvin Batiste, John Carter, Jimmy Hamilton, and David Murray, recorded live at the Public Theater in 1984 (LP, India Navigation IN-1062). Sadly, all but Murray are now gone. This beautiful recording nails the clarinet’s tone and texture, and reveals an amplifier’s midrange soul—or the lack thereof.

ASSOCIATED EQUIPMENT

Analog Sources Continuum Audio Labs Caliburn turntable & Castellon stand; Technics SL-1000R turntable; Kuzma 4Point, SAT, Technics tonearms; Lyra Atlas, Atlas SL, Atlas SL mono, Etna, Etna SL cartridges; Haniwa HCTR01 Mk.II, Miyajima Laboratory Zero (mono) & Madake, Ortofon Anna & A95, van den Hul Colibri XGW Stradivarius Signature phono cartridges.

Digital Sources dCS Rossini CD player/DAC, Lynx Hilo A/D-D/A converter; Sugar Cube SC-1 A/D + pop & click remover; Meridian Digital Media System; Pure Vinyl & Vinyl Studio software.

Preamplification Ypsilon MC-10L & MC-16L step-up transformers; Ypsilon VPS-100, CH Precision P1 (with X1 power supply) phono preamplifiers; CH Precision L1, darTZeel NHB-18S preamplifiers.

Power Amplifiers darTZeel NHB-458 monoblocks.

Loudspeakers EgglestonWorks Viginti, Sonus Faber Aida, Wilson Audio Specialties Alexx.

Cables Interconnect: Chord Company Sarum T (S/PDIF); Luminous Audio Technology Silver Reference; Stealth Sakra, Indra; TARA Labs Air Evolution, Zero, Zero Evolution; Teresonic Clarison Gold. Speaker: TARA Labs Omega Evolution SP. AC: AudioQuest Dragon, Dynamic Design Heritage AE15 Digital.

Accessories AudioQuest Niagara 7000 power conditioner; Oyaide AC wall box & receptacles; ASC Tube Traps; RPG BAD, Skyline, Abffusor panels; Stillpoints Aperture Room panels; Synergistic Research UEF products (various); Symposium Ultra platform; HRS Signature SXR, Stillpoints ESS stands; Finite Elemente Pagode amplifier stands; Audiodharma Cable Cooker; Furutech record demagnetizer & deStat; Audiodesksysteme Gläss Pro, Loricraft PRC4 Deluxe record-cleaning machines. —Michael Fremer

measurements, continued

sured value.

Fortunately, the Moon 888’s distortion was predominantly the subjectively innocuous third harmonic (fig.8), and lay at a low -80dB (0.01%, fig.9), though the fifth and seventh harmonics rose to the level of the third harmonic at high powers into 4 ohms (not

shown). Though some higher-order intermodulation products were evident when the amplifier drove an equal mix of 19 and 20kHz tones at high power into 4 ohms (fig.10), these all lay below -80dB, and the second-order difference product at 1kHz was vanishingly low in level, at -117dB (0.00014%).

Overall, this is good measured performance. I suspect that the Moon by Simaudio 888’s aggressive protection circuitry is due to the significant amount of energy that can be stored in an amplifier that can deliver more than a kilowatt into low impedances.

—John Atkinson

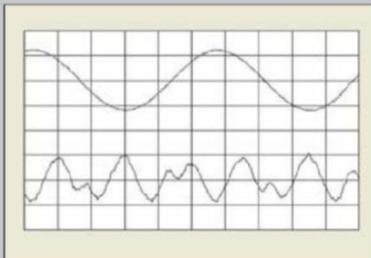


Fig.8 Moon 888, 1kHz waveform at 100W into 8 ohms, 0.0065% THD+N (top); distortion and noise waveform with fundamental notched out (bottom, not to scale).

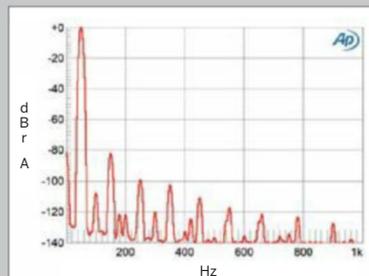


Fig.9 Moon 888, spectrum of 50Hz sine wave, DC-1kHz, at 50W into 8 ohms (linear frequency scale).

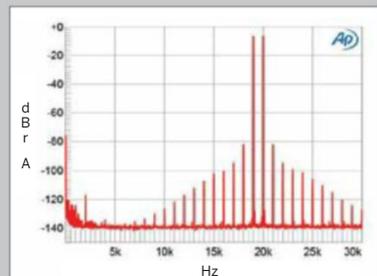


Fig.10 Moon 888, HF intermodulation spectrum, DC-30kHz, 19+20kHz at 200W peak into 4 ohms (linear frequency scale).

The darTZeels nail it, and, somewhat to my surprise, so did the Moon 888s, though the Simaudios traded some of the clarinet's warm yet reedy roundness and body for a more effective reproduction of this live recording's air and space.

In the superb *The Concert Sinatra*, Frank Sinatra is accompanied by Nelson Riddle conducting his own arrangements for large orchestra, recorded live to 35mm tape on the Samuel Goldwyn Studios' Soundstage 7 (LP, Reprise RS-1009/Mobile Fidelity Sound Lab MFSL 1-345). The Moon 888s' reproduction of this record produced a vivid, warm, 3D Sinatra hovering in space between the speakers on a cushion of air, with a sense of the voluminous stage behind. If you enjoy 3D sound, the Moon 888s delivered it.

Compared to my reference darTZeels, which do a damn good job of it, too, the Moon 888s produced "blacker" backgrounds and more air, without in any way sacrificing the rich sheen of Riddle's massed strings. There was *nothing* boring and/or homogenized about the 888s' sound—and nothing that sounded analytical or mechanical.

I've concentrated on the Moon 888's reproductions of the midrange and high frequencies in part because, when I first heard them in January 2017, at the Consumer Electronics Show, the sound in the room, for whatever reason(s), was unpleasantly icy, and audiophiles who don't appreciate solid-state amplifiers often call attention to this area. In my system, it was where the Moon 888 was most impressive.

Conclusions

Not having heard Simaudio's less costly Moon 880M monoblock, which was reviewed by Brian Damkroger in June 2013,⁶ I can't be sure, but I'd bet the Moon 888 sounds

similar, albeit with greater nuance, grace, and finesse, especially in the upper octaves, and greater transparency overall. Of course, if the recording is poor, you're going to hear that poorness in all its awful glory—but that's not the amplifier's fault. However, with the best recordings, regardless of genre or whether it was on LP, CD, or hi-rez file, the Moon 888s produced the highest level of sound quality in my system, passing along warmth or chills, transparency or sludge, grain or greatness, as dictated not by the electronics but by the recording itself.

To say that the Moon 888s delivered what I'd expect and demand for \$118,888/pair is not to say that it will necessarily meet the expectations of every audiophile, especially those who prefer warmth and, perhaps, a more fleshed-out harmonic presentation even if it's not on the recording. But they sure met mine.

Given a choice between the Moon by Simaudio 888, the Boulder 2150, and the very different-sounding Ypsilon Hyperion,⁷ which would I choose? That's my business. Which you'd choose is yours. I'm sticking with the darTZeel NHB-458s. They're not perfect, nor are any of the three mentioned above, including the Moon by Simaudio 888—to some degree, they all "sound." But based on what I've heard, clearing out Simaudio's skunkworks closet has paid off. Hopefully, the sonic gains made at the top of the Moon line will eventually trickle down to more affordable models at the middle and bottom. ■

6 See www.stereophile.com/content/simaudio-moon-evolution-880m-monoblock-power-amplifier.

7 See www.stereophile.com/content/epsilon-electronics-hyperion-monoblock-power-amplifier.