

Amazing Amplifier

When it comes to amplifiers, the hi-fi snob will tell you **“It’s got to be British.”**



That may have been true in the past but, you can find some seriously good pieces of kit from overseas if you know where to look.

Sherwood AX4103

£149.95

Value for money: ✓✓✓✓✓

At the forefront of this electronic New World Order is the multi-talented manufacturer Sherwood who, hitherto, have won plaudits for their multi-channel amplifiers. Somebody, thankfully, has persuaded them that there is as much mileage in the stereo market, as there is in the home cinema market-hence the release of the Sherwood AX4103.

Fully equipped with a remote control, two sets of speaker outputs, and 50 watts per channel, it would be easy to be dazzled by the many features on offer here, but this amp's not just a pretty face.

This classy amplifier is fully capable of transporting the listener directly into the soaring heights and dizzying depths of any sonic landscape. Equally at home with the glassy crispness of opera, as it is with the big, chunky beats of west coast hip-hop, the AX4103 thrills with its mastery of detail, and astonishes with the sweeping grandeur of its near perfect sound stage. The Sherwood AX4103 is the work of a top-notch manufacturer, at the peak of its manufacturing prowess, and it shows!

Throw something bass-heavy at it, like Morcheeba's 'Friction', and the AX4103 laps it up, reproducing taut bass lines with controlled assurance, never drowning the midrange, as less capable amps tend to do. Feed it 'You make me feel so young' by Frank Sinatra and the Ratpack, and glory in the full, evocative soundstage-a real 'close your eyes and you're there' experience. 'The Drinking Song' from La Traviata is a nightmare for an amplifier to reproduce-it swells from one vocal, to a multitude of voices very quickly, but this amplifier deftly handles the many musical strands, without ever sounding out of its depth.

System matching with this amplifier turned out to be surprisingly simple. As long as you match it with a pair of speakers that are fairly easy to drive, you should have no problems-we tried this amp with a pair of KEF Cresta 1s and a pair of Mission 773es, and the AX4103 was perfectly content to drive both.

Someone will have to re-write the old adage 'Jack of all trades, master of none' because this amplifier really can do it all.

Reviewed by Lol Lecanu