

Soundrebels.com>Artykuły>Recenzje>Extraudio XP5 MKII & XP-A1500 MKII

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Link: <https://soundrebels.com/extraudio-xp5-mkii-xp-a1500-mkii/>



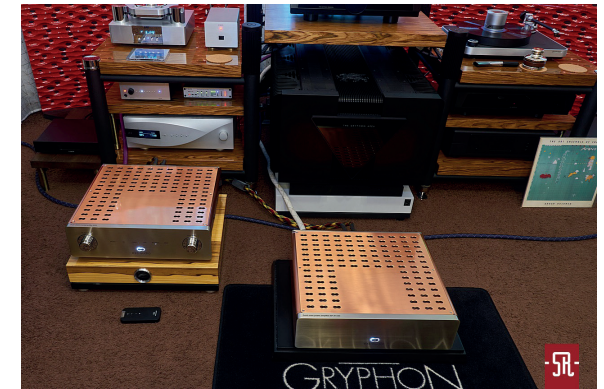
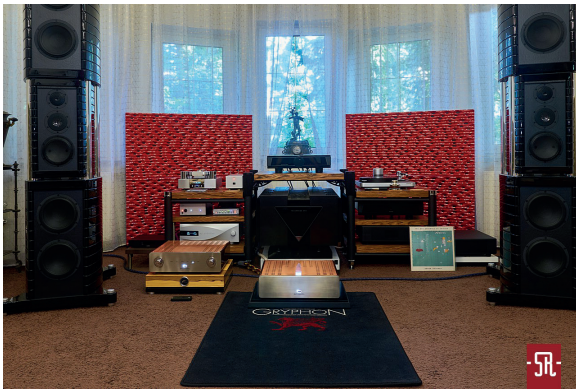


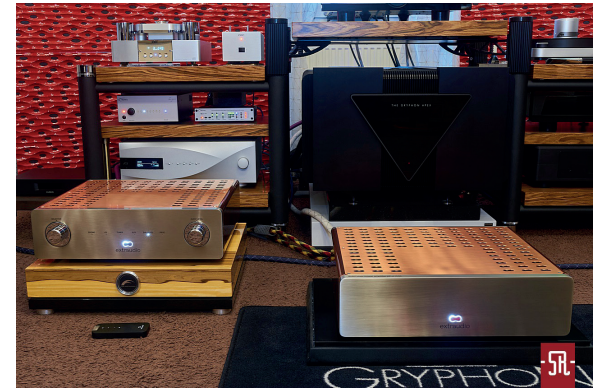
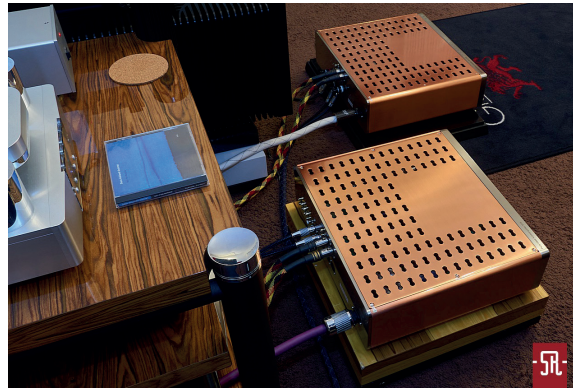
## Opinion 2

It is a natural fact that any brand that wants to stay in the market must develop its projects. Of course, it can also expand its product range, as demonstrated by today's Dutch company, which, in addition to electronics—the main focus of its existence—also offers audio cables. However, regardless of the breadth of its offerings, modifications that introduce quality improvements are necessary, as this is precisely the goal when introducing new models or improving existing ones. Today, we will look at an example of this. Specifically, it involves a set provided by the distributor \*Quality Audio\*, based in Chełmża, consisting of the latest version of the flagship Extraudio XP5 MkII line preamplifier, which uses vacuum tubes in its electrical circuit, and the Extraudio XP-A1500 stereo power amplifier, making its debut on our portal in the MkII version, representing Class D, increasingly popular among music lovers.

This is an interesting topic because it showcases a comprehensive solution for an advanced amplification section, but it is also very relevant to me from the perspective of the sound of the latest incarnations of the line preamplifier and the power amplifier it controls. So, if you are also curious to know what happened during my several days of experimentation, I invite you to read the text below.

Getting into technical details, it doesn't take much effort to see that, typically for the same product line, both tested constructions come in identical enclosures. These are medium-sized rectangular boxes with a thick aluminum panel on the front. However, as is usually the case with this manufacturer, what truly gives these constructions their style is the finish. In this case, the front features a brushed titanium finish, while the curved sides, which wrap around the inner components and are perforated on top with the brand's logo (a silhouette of a "biscuit"), are coated in copper and finally lacquered to a high gloss on the rest of the casing. I assure you, photos do not do it justice, but seeing it in person, you are faced with a true masterpiece of applied design. Simply put, these devices for music-obsessed enthusiasts look like a million dollars.





What about the operation and equipment of each component? Naturally, the arrangement of controls and connectors is determined by its specific use. For the preamplifier, on the front sides, we find two chrome knobs: small in diameter where the user's fingers make contact, but with an attractive large bezel. The knob on the left is the input selector, while the one on the right controls the signal level. Between them, there are six LEDs that indicate the selection of the line input (phono, CD, tuner, aux, balanced, proc), and below these, in the center of the panel, there is an illuminated switch that uses the aforementioned biscuit motif.

Regarding the internal circuit construction, I will only mention one aspect that many of us consider crucial: the successful integration of vacuum tubes. I will explain why I consider this a success in the next part of the review. As for the set of connectors located at the rear, we have four RCA inputs and one XLR, with a ground terminal for the internal phono preamplifier, a signal pass-through connection in RCA/XLR versions, an input for a processor in the same standards (RCA/XLR), and the standard IEC power connector. Naturally, a remote control is also included.

As for the power amplifier, given its simplicity in terms of operation and setup, I'll just say that on the front panel, there's an illuminated power switch in the shape of a biscuit. On the back, there are RCA/XLR line inputs, simple outputs for the speaker signal, and a power connector.

I must admit that, despite my intention to evaluate the entire set of devices, I was particularly interested in the performance of the preamplifier on its own, that is, in combination with my audio system. This interest was, of course, due to the sonic results of applying the tubes in their latest version. In reality, I wanted to know if, despite efforts to improve sound resolution, these tubes might have caused something that, while pleasant to many ears, ends up homogenizing the signal, which I call "turning the sound into mush." For me, music should pulse with life, not spread monotonously across the floor, and if we use free electrons, they should be a complement, not the overly seasoned main dish.

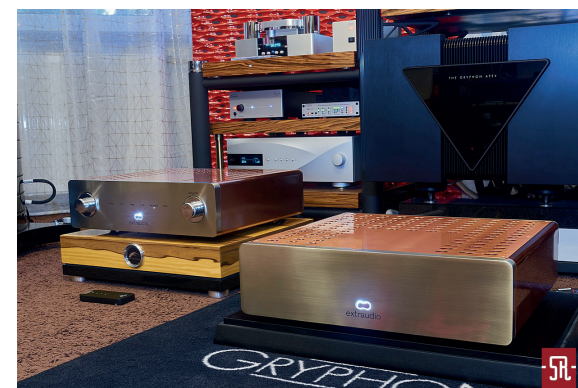
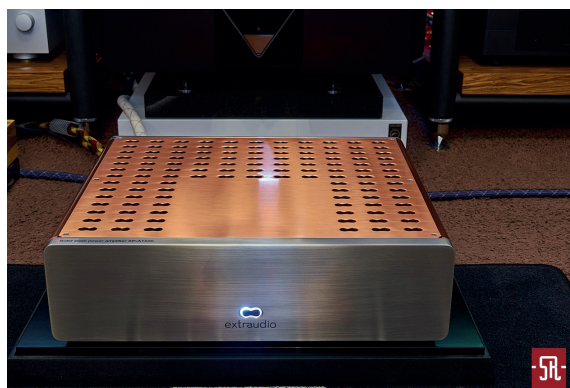


So, how did I perceive the new version of the XP5? With complete, yet very positive, surprise. It showed excellent edge, dynamism, and energy, all adorned with resonant highs. This style of sound was exactly what I was looking for: lively, but with a great essence, so much so that I didn't even try to detect the intervention of the aforementioned tubes. In fact, I forgot about their presence, which clearly indicates that their implementation by the engineers was a success. The Apex controlled by Extraudio went very low in the bass, illuminated the highs well, and didn't forget to give the music an appropriate body. Interestingly, the result of this combination of sounds was even a bit livelier than with my usual Gryphon (Pandora) preamplifier, but this didn't bother me at all; in fact, it sometimes offered a more interesting insight into the recordings, which, I don't hide, I really appreciate when done with good taste.

And just when I was beginning to wonder why the Dutch engineering team had only added a symbolic hint of tube essence to the sound, everything became clear when using the dedicated power amplifier, which had also been technically improved compared to the prototype we tested some time ago. It turns out that the engineers made a smart move by using the aforementioned amplifier to slightly saturate and enrich the sound. This amplifier was characterized by better plasticity, delivering a more forceful and energetic punch, but most importantly, it did not lose its expansive presentation. The music continued to resonate with a life full of surprises, and with good reason: the amplifier offers 1.5 kW of power, with a stronger focus on its color and texture, without falling into the pedantry of excessively dissecting the sound.

In short, combining components designed to work together provided a very balanced music listening experience, focused on delivering auditory pleasure rather than seeking extremes, which allowed for the entire testing process to proceed with excellent results in perceiving the full musical spectrum.

A good example of this was the work of Jan Garbarek together with The Hilliard Ensemble, which I listen to frequently, this time in their live version from 2014 in a church in mountainous Bellinzona, Switzerland. The performance was excellent, as it not only showcased the vastness of the space that housed both the musicians and the multitude of listeners, but also, despite the palpable touch of sound plasticity, one could hear with Swiss precision the hard work of the artists and ultimately enjoy the beautiful vocal and instrumental phrases of the entire ensemble and each individual musician. And I assure you, in a recording environment with reverberant acoustics like that of a monastery, it's very easy to lose the clarity that, in my opinion, is crucial for this type of music: the mastery of the sound of each virtual source. However, when a system offers the right microdynamics (such as the capabilities of the preamplifier mentioned at the beginning) and supports it at the precise moment with the necessary amount of energy (here I am referring, of course, to the amplifier's 1500W power), as the Dutch set did, we are effortlessly invited to a concert in our own home. And even better, using the volume control, we can virtually move closer to or further away from the performance stage. Depending on my mood during the test, I did this several times, and I assure you, the effect is fascinating.







Similarly, but with added impact and smoothness, was the music of the energetic rockers Slayer with their album “Reign In Blood.” This aggressive music, if the system does not have the ability to deliver an adequate punch from the low frequencies, well-anchored in the midrange, is difficult to convey meaningfully. On the other hand, if it delivers monotonous rumbles instead of quick punches, the result is not satisfactory either. True, fans of the so-called “bass hum” might like this, but let’s be realistic, who wants to listen to rock played by musicians doped with Pavulon? Obviously, no one. And that is precisely why the innards of the Extraudio power amplifier hold a force that borders on the limits of reason, delivered quickly and firmly. It won’t cause harm if unused, but when suddenly needed, there it is, ready to deliver an impressive blow. Yes, that’s right, without mercy, because that’s what it’s all about. And that’s why the featured duo proved interesting, because it had no trouble meeting this script.

I hope the description above makes it clear that seemingly excessive power is not a far-fetched idea. It’s true that, in most cases, we use only a fraction of that power, but High End is a league of devices that must be prepared to express even the most challenging and complex bursts of energy. That’s why it’s better to have that power than to later settle for half-measures due to a lack of technological consistency. The Dutch know this, which is why their amplification sections, with their performance, manage to outshine a large part of the competition, something that recently hasn’t always translated into popularity among the most demanding customers.

Who would I recommend the set described above to? You know what? This might be a bit bold, but it would be easier for me to identify the potential discontent. And those would only be the staunch tube enthusiasts, because even though the line preamplifier uses tubes in its circuits, it’s not strictly a tube sound. Yes, it’s a plastic, juicy sound, but not strictly tube-like, since it’s also capable of moving walls in the lower range. So, if you don’t belong to that group, in my opinion, you have the green light.

**Mr. Jacek Pazio**  
**SoundRebels**

## System used during the test:

- CD Transport: CEC TL 0 3.0
- Streamer: Lumin U2 Mini + Silent Angel Bonn N8 switch
- Digital-to-Analog Converter (DAC): dCS Vivaldi DAC 2.0
- Master Clock: Mutec REF 10 SE-120
- Reclocker: Mutec MC-3+USB
- Shunyata Clock: Shunyata Research Omega Clock
- Shunyata Power Filter: Shunyata Sigma V2 NR
- Line Preamplifier: Gryphon Audio Pandora
- Power Amplifier: Gryphon Audio APEX Stereo
- Speakers: Gauder Akustik Berlina RC-11 Black Edition
- Speaker Cables: Furutech Nanoflux-NCF Speaker Cable
- IC RCA Cables: Hijiri Million "Kiwami", Vermouth Audio Reference
- IC XLR Cables: Hijiri Million "Kiwami", Furutech DAS-4.1
- Digital IC Cable: Hijiri HDG-X Million
- LAN Cable: NxLT LAN FLAME
- Power Cables: Hijiri Takumi Maestro, Furutech Project-V1, Furutech NanoFlux NCF, Furutech DPS-4.1 + FI-E50 NCF(R)/ FI-50(R), Hijiri Nagomi, Vermouth Audio Reference Power Cord, Acrolink 8N-PC8100 Performante, Synergistic Research Galileo SX AC
- Audio Table: BASE AUDIO 2

### Accessories:

- Fuses: Quantum Science Audio Red, Synergistic Research Orange
- Anti-vibration: Harmonix TU 505EX MK II, Stillpoints Ultra Mini
- Anti-vibration Platform: Solid Tech
- Power Filters: Harmonix AC Enacom Improved for 100-240V
- Power Strip: Power Base High End, Furutech NCF Power Vault-E
- Acoustic Panels: Artnovion

### Analog Setup:

- Turntable: Clearaudio Concept
- Cartridge: Dynavector DV20X2H
- Phono Preamplifier: RCM Audio The Big Phono
- Record Clamp: DS Audio ES-001
- Open Reel Tape Recorder: Studer A80

**Magazine:** <https://soundrebels.com/>

**Distribution:** Quality Audio / <https://www.qualityaudio.pl/>

**Manufacturer:** <https://www.extraudio.com/>

**Models:**

**Preamplifier** Extraudio XP5 MKII

**Power Amplifier** Extraudio XP-A1500 MKII