

The mammoth amplifier 'The Sovereign': operation menhir



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According to Stanley Kubrick's immortal science fiction classic '2001', a large monolith brought the technical evolution to mankind. The know-how must have flowed mainly into the development of top-flight amplifiers as their present high-end-point manifests itself exactly in the shape of a Messianic obelisk. The amplifier the Sovereign's monumental design is indeed symbolic/has the value of a symbol. Marita and Thomas Höhne, who have laid the foundation-stone of these power stations have ensured with their triumphal pillars that their names will live on while they are still alive.

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The outward size of the blocks, not only serving the build but as well the heat dissipation and because of the enormous amount of components necessary anyway, is not the sole sign for going beyond common limits.

10 kilowatts (!) pulse power on 1 Ohm - with power like this you are easily able to spot weld, accelerate a moped to 100 k.p.h. or ionize tweeters all the time. Thomas Höhne knows very well what he is doing with the last-mentioned discipline, but we will talk about this later.

Naturally, you can also take up two electric cookers connected in parallel to baking temperature by feeding in the guaranteed 3000 watt sinusoidal power of the Sovereign. It is known that the juice required for it cannot be taken easily out of any socket and this is why a stable herd instinct needs the supply of three-phase current. Höhne's Twin

Tower as well demonstrates its full willingness to power only with a three-core connection. The usual contact with modest 230 instead of 380 volt makes the owner of a pair of Sovereigns (especially designed for an energy restriction) content himself with a reduced power development, but it is still enough for an impressive yield.

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If the electrical fitter was asked to come before the hi-fi equipment, it will really pay off. The power supply unit will not only charge up from the three-phase current line with a higher voltage promising more dynamics but it will as well supply with an almost constant direct current. Three toroidal core transformers of an English origin with two short-term 4 kw performance each demonstrate extremely little voltage difference between neutral and full speed. Thus an additional circuit system for a voltage stabilization including all of its disadvantages concerning an unimpeded flow of current was dispensable.

The total capacity of the 40 capacitors inserted in each block proves to be equal to the enormous potential of the transformers. If usually this result varies between some thousand microfarad when talking about amplifiers, the Sovereign's short-term current storages might claim the title of the 'Allgemeiner Deutscher **Farad**-Club'. In case of a

sudden top requirement they would help the amplifier with incredible 1.3 farad. As an illustration: one single simple disk capacitor of this capacity would have to own such a large total surface that the world could be wrapped in it like a chocolate in paper. An absolutely clean pulse behaviour should have been guaranteed with it as it represents one of the declared aims of development.

Service technicians should allow themselves a safety guarantee of about three days after having switched off before they are toying with the silly idea of unscrewing the cuboids as this is the time that the capacitors will need for a total discharge. If you come in contact with them beforehand, you will be hit by an electrical shock. As long as the apparatus is running, it is advisable to stay away from the loudspeakers' connection as well. A direct contact would very likely produce sounds, even though not very harmonic ones.

Besides, everything of this amplifier reaches an order of magnitude that would be circumscribed aptly with the term 'limits'. The smallest reason would cause a disastrous effect: in the stage of development sometimes a tiny short circuit at the wrong place would have been sufficient for laying several hundred very valuable Motorola power transistors to rest and this already publishes their number.

The circuit layout of the giants is a mixed product of the most modern EDP work and traditional handicraft. A print board, simulated on a computer, was at first realized without printed circuit board and the shell was then balanced by ear through simply rearranging single segments - this is basically the method many of us have learned with their first cosmos construction kit named 'The little electrician'. This may sound a little disrespectful, but it describes an exceptionally lavish and irreplaceable process. Without this trial and error approach it would not be possible to handle the squadron of power transistors.

As it was the aim to construct a first-class amplifier and not a second-rate detector radio, the almost finished main board caused further difficulties. Its length roughly corresponds to the Paris standard metre and you can easily picture to yourself that the conductor paths entwined on such an extent will reach an order of magnitude that already predestines it for useful radio reception. Waves like that have to remain outside, but an irradiation strength was adjusted only after wellnigh infinite detailed work. 'On that occasion we gained many valuable discoveries for our further developments in the consumer class', reports Thomas Höhne.

If the Sovereign was not really something in itself, it would have the justification for its existence without question as an didactic play alone. The ancient realization that coping with extreme challenges would be a great help in dealing with everyday tasks. But HIFI VISION does not want to represent the philosophical side, but simply recognize the performance that lead to the realization of this watt-national park. And we want to stress that being occupied with high fidelity would only be half as nice without fascinating objects of that pattern.

This view is shared in the USA as well, being supplied with the products of Elze by an importer. The country of origin of huge amplifiers and thus naturally susceptible to an almost gigantic example was generous in its ovations. Thomas Höhne was able to notch up a considerable amount of overseas popularity at the latest Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas as his deserved reward.

What would the description of the world's largest amplifier be without listening to it? Naturally, a delegation of HIFI VISION went for a bearing of powers to Elze/Wülfingen, about 40 km in the south of Hannover. There, the Höhnes run their family's and company's headquarters and entertain their guests with an discreet attention and an insistent

volume. Naturally, none of the auditory demonstration proven visitors would have in mind to take the positively inhuman level amiss. Also Höhne junior, just eight years old, and the own snow-white cat, after all member of a species that is known for having a sensitive hearing, meet the musical orgy with a stoic calmness.

The ritual is carried out like that: 'Let's put on some music', suggests the host. And this is the signal for those people with disturbance of the cardiac rhythm to leave the room hurriedly with/making friendly excuses. A contradictory statement would produce no effect and Thomas Höhne, consequent and analogue, starts rummaging through his favourite records without further delay, pulls out one accurately and screws it up tight on his Oracle Delphi. To perfect the demonstration, his favourites have been played frequently and are thus equipped with corresponding traces of use that will already make the short way through the initial groove an unforgettable experience. Hardly ever did we hear the little cracks that loud and that unusually clearly outlined, but this is only a first foretaste of the hurricane that is now brewing unavoidably. With a little luck the audience will enjoy a live recording and then there will be something like a continuous increase. Thunderous applause creates a transition that makes it easier for the ears to adapt themselves.

Maybe the head of the family managed to catch the maxi-version of 'Joyride' and then any listener will suddenly realize what Sweden's star band intended with it: a feat of concentrated effort through every up and down. The boom as an ultimatum rings out of the four Infinity Betas arranged picturesquely round the Sovereign duo. You believe to detect in the techno passages the effort of individual combinational circuits. It is chirping, snoring and shimmering so much that the ears are hard put to not wind themselves in partial oscillation. The listener digs grimly into every detail and into the leather of the group of seats.

At this point a popular formulation among persons testing hi-fi was supposed to be filled with new meaning: 'The room opened up widely...' And it does so towards the back. In the audience's back there is fortunately a wall and you have to realize this desperately to overcome the fear of being deprived of a firm hold by a shock wave and being blown out of the room to where a sweet fish-pond adorns the Höhne front garden. Could an amplifier be credited with anything better than the perfect linking with brute elemental force, boundless openness and delightful idyll?

Sudden silence being rediscovered here is an ominous sign. While the cat suddenly is awoken rudely from its musical dreams and briefly blinks indignantly, the host reaches for the next record. This time he shows mercy: Paul Simon's famous concert at Central Park appears like a sedative despite the volume after the high-tech mixture. Even the testing persons' own urge for desperate analysis of individual string and cymbal touches flags. It really works - you are able to listen very relaxed to music with the power amplifier even as a HIFI VISION damaged specialized journalist; at least some times of Paul Simon.

Like this the inclined (to the back) auditory learns something new constantly. Tina Turner, being described by little imaginative writers as rocker, backs up thanks to her voice heated up by several kilowatts that she can be catalogued a hundred per cent with under this label and only this one. Motown sound proves emphatically that it is named with justification the traditional home of unrestrained power. Pink Floyd's gloomy last days' classic 'Welcome to The machine' suggests with an apocalyptic rumbling the supposition that Fritz Lang's terrifying vision 'Metropolis' has already become reality within reach. At least for a few minutes in the Höhne's living room that does not provide a hiding-place in its just as tasteful as scarce furnishing, escaped from the clutches of the mighty world of machines.

Every inferno will come to an end some time, and it is the same with the Sovereign demonstration in Uncle Tom's cabin. Contrary to expectation, the brute concert does not harm, neither within the audience's ear-drum and diaphragm nor on the foil of the Emit-tweeters. The master of things' assurance that he did expose many a copy of these as has been proved highly resilient Beta-tweeters to a sudden evaporation should nevertheless not being questioned. No doubt that the show was by no means plain but highly moving and simply exciting and enchanting. The calm after the storm left onethoughtful testing person and one thoughtful writer. Since that time one of them asks himself why his hearing check routine rolls gently far away from the experience world revealed on one evening with the Tom's twins. And the other one fell to brooding about the phenomenon that his vocabulary he has always been proud of would not be sufficient for putting the kick made by Sovereign into adequate words.

The High End marketing company was successful with operation menhir. With an amplifier designed without limits Höhne's dream became reality. Without false modesty the originator defines his position: 'My competitors' names are neither Restek nor Burmester but tourist industries.' Nicely said. Nevertheless, HIFI VISION assumes that the typical Sovereign candidate could rather be found among those successful fellow citizens who can afford at least two more luxury trips and a Mercedes Benz despite the costs for a two-week trip to the tidal shallows. In any case the annual edition of 1992, four Sovereign pairs, exists and is sold out for the complete price of 125.000,- each. Thus it is essential to gain new appeal in queuing up if 'the world's biggest, strongest and most expensive amplifier' (producer's information) should one day start the listening attack in the house of your own. We will not hide that a colleague is claiming persistently that the world's most expensive amplifier would be offered by an American open-end-forge and would be called 'The Black Hole'. All right. This apparition therefore shares the destiny of all black holes that are admittedly provable after a certain expenditure but have never been seen. According to the latest astronomical researches every of these all-devouring cosmic mouths is neatly balanced anyway by the existence of a white hole that bubbles out the sucked up matter somewhere in the space and time structure. From time to time such sources might bring out products that countermand customary standards like the mysterious monolith of knowledge that provoked an 'Odyssey in Space'.

ORIGINAL REVIEW "HiFiVision"

Original picture from the Guinness Book of Records, Germany

The kids: Nina Nietzsche & Sebastian Hoehne (jr) in front of the best and biggest High End Hi-Fi amplifiers for home use. THE SOVEREIGN

