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integrated-amplifier

Thrax Audio Enyo Mk2 integrated amplifier

- [REVIEW](#)
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The [Thrax Audio](#) Enyo Mk2 is an integrated amplifier. You can tell as much from the display and the controls, once you have worked out their functions. What you can't tell without turning it on and looking through the protective grille is that this is a tube amplifier. Those familiar with the sound of pentodes run in push-pull would probably be able to detect a tube

characteristic to the sound, but the Enyo sounds a lot less like it produces power with thermionic devices than most of its kin.

The output tubes are concealed within secondary covers within the case with two GU50s per channel. This Russian tube is not very common in audio amplifiers but capable of 50W when operated in this ultra linear fashion. According to Thrax that output is true for both four and eight-ohm loads, which is surprising. This consistency is a result of the unusual DC coupled nature of the circuit. The Enyo has just one capacitor in the DC coupled signal path and combines the GU50s with an ECC88 input tube and a 6N6P driver. It's collection of devices that are relatively inexpensive to replace when that moment eventually comes. Thrax says that the GU50s are good for 1,000 hours while the smaller tubes last twice as long and are easy to install, thanks to auto-biasing for the output devices.



It has a twin brother in the Thrax [Ares Mk II](#). That is a fully transistorised integrated amplifier at the same price as the Enyo. It's smaller but nearly as heavy because of the carved-from-solid nature of its metalwork. The Enyo is of a more conventional construction with a heavy front panel and large display, but the main case is in steel with plenty of perforation to keep

things cool. Both amplifiers appear to share the same preamplifier section, which includes single-ended and balanced inputs, an MM/MC phono stage, and the option to add a streaming DAC board. Both sections have independent power supplies in order to minimise pollution of analogue by digital sections, and possibly vice versa. Unlike 99% of tube amps, the Enyo has a home theatre bypass option, which is essentially a way of bypassing the volume control on one input so that the amplifier can be used to power the front left and right channels in a surround system. Quite how you are going to tonally match this with the amplifier driving the centre channel is another question.

The DAC board is not the usual afterthought found on many integrated amps. It offers the full gamut of inputs including AES/EBU, USB and Ethernet, the latter allowing Enyo to be used as a streamer with control by a third party UPnP app or with Roon. On the numbers front it's good for up to 32-bit 768kHz PCM (384kHz via ethernet) and DSD256 (4x) which are respectable numbers indicating that this is a modern chipset. That doesn't necessarily equate to high quality, but is a good start.

Nominal vs real

While output is quoted as being the same regardless of loudspeaker impedance there are four and eight Ohm taps connected to suitably marked terminals on the back panel. As ever with such alternatives it is best to listen to the options rather than picking the one that matches your loudspeaker's nominal impedance. The word nominal is used because few if any speakers have a consistent impedance at all frequencies, this key characteristic tends to drop at lower frequencies and this is what makes the difference between easy and less easy to drive loudspeakers. It is often more critical than sensitivity when it comes to amp/speaker matching.

Initial listening was via Perlisten S7t floorstanders and this proved to be a particularly favourable pairing. These speakers are very transparent and the Enyo allowed them to deliver imaging that was absolutely superb, really solid and almost holographic in fact. Michael Manring's 'Selene' was also impressive, it feels like you're getting double the usual data because there's so much depth, texture and body, and the bass harmonics are particularly attractive. It's not quite as solid in the bass as the Ares, but the extra body and depth of tone that the tube element brings makes it the more appealing amplifier.



With PMC twenty5.26i speakers and some acoustic music in the form of Gianluigi Trovesi's *Stravaganze consonanti* (ECM) performed with original instruments, the Enyo produces a sumptuous get highly detailed result. Acoustic instruments and tubes are a perfect pairing when it comes to amplifiers. They put back what the recording fails to capture, which is essentially harmonic elaboration which while it may not be totally accurate, sounds extremely natural. And in this instance you get more control and definition than is usually the case.

More musical

Using the onboard DAC the results remain excellent, better in fact than many standalone converters. With my Lumin U2 mini connected to the USB input the Enyo gives a really broad, relaxed and inevitably slightly tubey sound that while it's not as crisp and precise as solid state alternatives makes up for this with an essentially more musical, highly engaging sound. That said, low-level resolution could be a little better, even in a tube design that's as well thought through as this it's not possible to push the noise floor down as far as Thrax achieved with Ares.

Phono gain

With the turntable connected to the moving coil inputs and my Rega Aphelion 2 cartridge providing signal I got a hum free result, something that couldn't be achieved with Ares (perhaps due to the absence of an earth connection on the Rega P10). On a Thiago Nassif track ('Soar Estranho' from Mente) the kick drum had the requisite impact and the sound was good and open with decent articulation in the bass. The phono stage doesn't have a huge amount of gain so you need to whack it up quite a bit to get the dynamics going which is fine until you switch to the digital input and the volume jumps dramatically. The absence of input gain adjustment means that care needs to be taken when making this switch, you have been warned!



Overall the phono stage is good but not in the same league as the DAC. It's probably equivalent to a separate phono stage at around £1,200, whereas the digital side is as good as something at twice that price maybe more. You're certainly not very inclined to start scrolling and swiping when Patti Smith is singing 'Beneath the Southern Cross.' This proved to be an intense experience that revealed all the power and glory of that remarkable artist. I also like

the way that you get a really strong sense of dynamics and energy, without having to turn the level up too high. Well-made modern recordings like *Mirage* by Lilja sound absolutely delicious with huge scale and really strong presence, there's even a sumptuousness that you only find on the best analogue recordings. This amp makes it plain that standards in pro audio have taken a substantial leap in the last decade or so.

Listen for longer

An example of vintage analogue sound is Miles Davis' *Live Evil*, which doesn't sound quite so polished by any means, but makes good musical sense with the Enyo's digital input, especially the guitar and horn on 'Medley: Gemini – Double Image', which is superb, powerful and menacing but clean. The beauty of this amplifier is that it can deliver the energy of a piece like this but doesn't have the graininess of transistor alternatives which can make brass sound brash. It has plenty of power too and will drive a speaker like this PMC with ease, not all tube amps can do this and certainly none of the single ended variety.

When I spoke to the Thrax distributor about the Ares and Enyo, he told me that the tube amp is more popular than its chunky solid state brother. Having heard both I'm not surprised, the Enyo brings out detail and timing exceedingly well and delivers the music in a richer and more fluid fashion. That said I got excellent results with Ares too. It's unusual to find this sort of alternative within one range and means that it should be possible to audition both in one place, so take your speakers to that place and see which amp works best with them. There will be some pairings that favour Ares for sure, but on balance the Enyo is the more musically beguiling of the two. Any amp that makes you want to listen for longer always is going to be a winner.

Technical specifications

- Type: Push-pull tube, two-channel integrated amplifier with built-in phono stage
- Analogue inputs: One MM/MC phono input (via RCA jacks), three single-ended line-level inputs (via RCA jacks), one balanced input (via XLR connectors)
- Digital inputs Two S/PDIF (one coaxial, one optical), one USB port, one AES/EBU (via XLR), one streaming (via RJ45)
- Analogue outputs: loudspeaker binding posts
- Supported sample rates: Coaxial and optical S/PDIF not specified, USB up to 32-bit —768kHz, DSD256
- Input impedance: High-level 40kOhms, Phono variable, Power amp N/A
- Power Output: 50Wpc @ 8 & 4 Ohms
- Signal to Noise Ratio: 103dB
- Dimensions (H×W×D): 190 × 430 × 480mm
- Weight: 29kg
- Price: £12,900, DAC £2,900

Manufacturer

Thrax Audio

www.thraxaudio.com