



Watts in a name?

THIS DANISH HEAVYWEIGHT AMPLIFIER PACKS A LOT OF WATTS INTO A STYLISH PACKAGE, BUT DOES IT PULL ITS WEIGHT ON SOUND QUALITY? CHRIS FRANKLAND FINDS OUT

However you look at it, the Vitus Audio RI-101 MkII is a bit of a beast. I advise caution when attempting to lift it and I would leave that to your retailer if I were you – at over 37kg, it's seriously heavy.

This integrated amplifier is my first experience of Vitus, a company founded in Denmark in 1995 by Hans-Ole Vitus because – its website tells us – his taste for expensive hi-fi outstripped his financial means, so he decided to design it for himself.

The original RI-100 integrated amplifier, of which the current RI-101 MkII is a second refinement, was introduced in 2010, followed by the RI-101 in 2017 and in 2020 by the MkII iteration here. And though the size and weight strike you first, it's the build quality and finish that really impress. With its sturdy case and those two imposing solid anodised aluminium slabs that form the front panel and sit either side of the display window, the RI-101 MkII exudes quality from every pore. The review sample was supplied in the Titanium Orange special finish and – although that adds £2,000 to the £14,200 asking price – I have to say it looked a million dollars.

The RI-101 MkII sits within Vitus's Reference range, which are its 'entry-level' products, with the Signature and Masterpiece series above it. Vitus prides itself on making its products in its own factory in Denmark. It has its own PCB production line with its own pick-and-place machine to stuff

the boards and a vapour soldering machine, which it says is usually found in aerospace applications and which it believes, although slower than flow-soldering, produces a higher-quality result.

When toroidals won't do...

Vitus has always said it doesn't believe toroidal transformers pass muster, and so in its more premium Signature range it uses UI laminated core transformers, custom-made to its specifications. The RI-101 MkII uses a more traditional EI core laminated transformer, but these are substantial and no doubt account for a fair part of the amplifier's weight.

Although the overall design of the new RI-101 MkII is broadly the same as the original RI-100, with identical power and output stages, which is a bridged design using two pairs of output transformers, the input stage on the power supply has been significantly updated and there are also major upgrades to the preamplifier section. And the output? well, the RI-101 MkII packs a hefty 300W under the bonnet, roughly doubling into a 4ohm load, and so it should have no trouble driving even the least efficient loudspeakers.