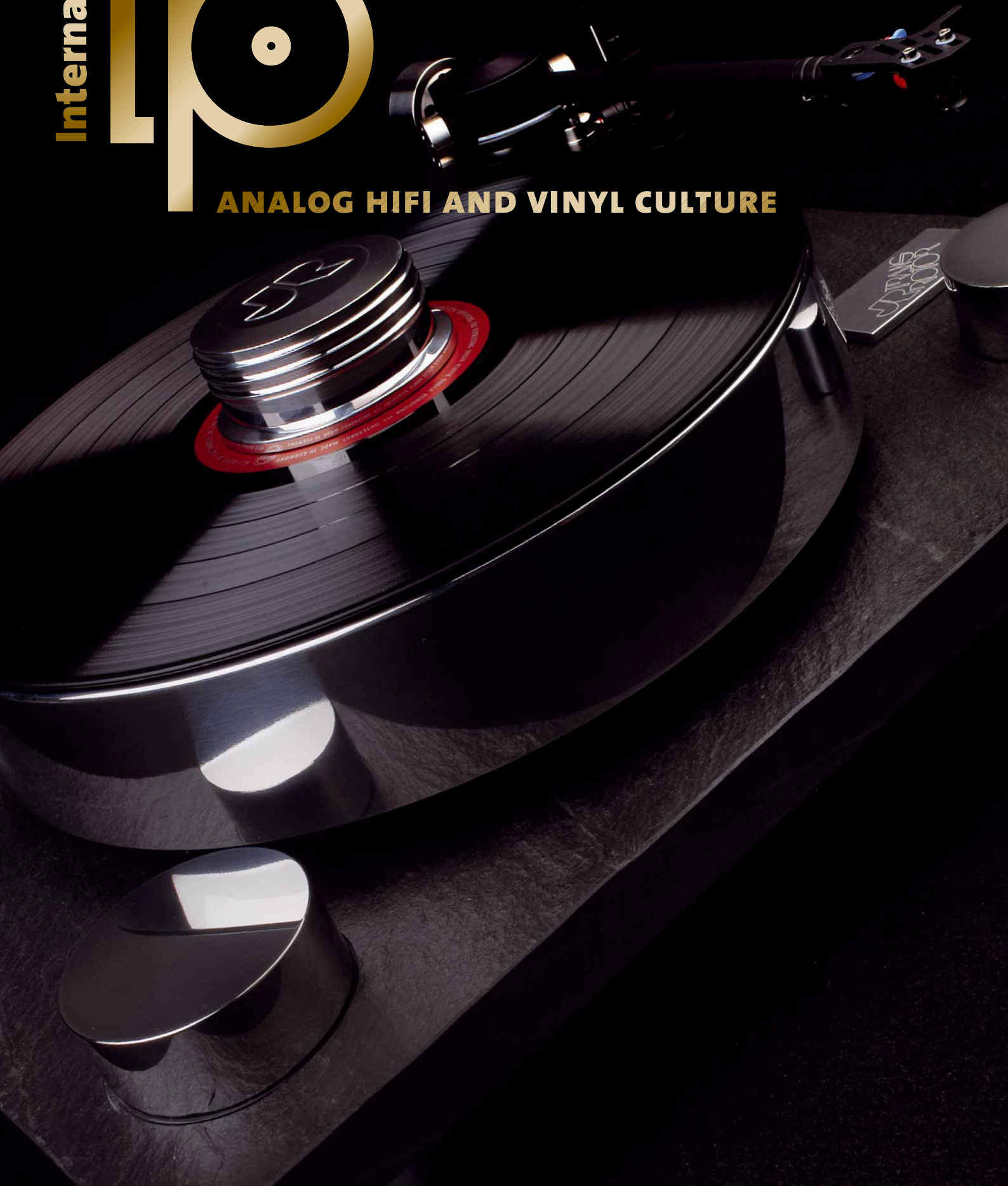


International LP

Issue 3/2025 · 5,90 €

ANALOG HIFI AND VINYL CULTURE



ONE FOR ALL

All-in-one devices are all the rage. It's no coincidence that this issue features a whole range of designs that can drastically reduce the number of devices in a hi-fi system. One of the most impressive examples of this type comes from Slovakia.







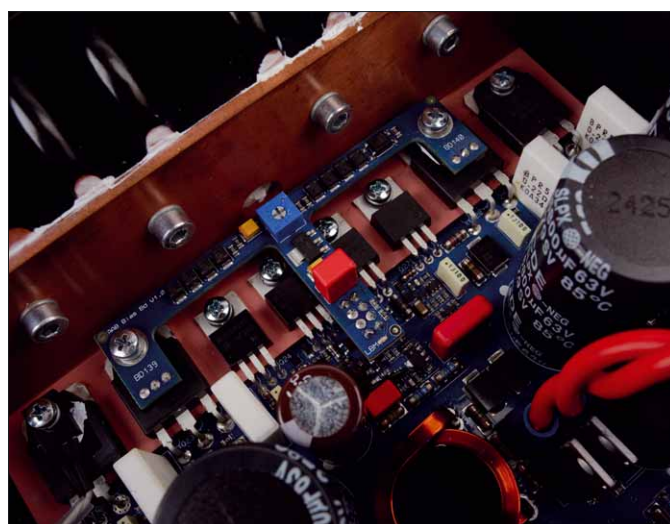
Thanks to the new operating concept, there are no buttons or switches on the front of the device

Yes, Canor again. This highly innovative company, based in Slovakia's second-largest city (Prešov), has been mixing tube and semiconductor technology for 30 years and always knows how to please with convincing results. I visited the company a good two years ago and was amazed at the sheer scale of the undertaking and the number of well-known manufacturers for whom it develops and manufactures pro-

ducts. Understandably, these manufacturers are not particularly interested in publicizing such collaborations, but that doesn't really matter to us at this point – Canor itself has so many interesting arrows in its quiver that we can focus exclusively on devices from this brand. A few impressions from my visit at that time can be found at the end of this article.



Under the shielding cup: one of the two essential tubes



The powerful amplifier delivers an easy 200 watts of continuous power

Our current object of desire is called „Virtus A3,“ costs around € 6,000, and is only a full amplifier at first glance. In fact, this 18-kilogram behemoth is practically a complete hi-fi system – apart from the speakers and various source devices.

Under the cover of the Virtus A3 is a powerful hybrid integrated amplifier, a high-performance D/A converter, and a phono preamplifier suitable for both MM and MC cartridges.

The manufacturer openly admits that this device was one of the most complex developments in the company's history, and when you take a look under the cover, it becomes clear why: the effort that went into it is extremely impressive – more on that later. First, let's take a look at the „weight“ of the Virtus A3, because it has a few surprises in store. We are already accustomed to Canor devices communicating with the user via easy-to-read yellow dot matrix displays, which is also the case with the A3. But that's not all. Whereas the center of the usual central rotary encoder has always featured an illuminated company logo, this model is the first to feature an integrated round color display, which is also (of course) touch-sensitive. Despite a multitude of functions, this allows for a very tidy front panel layout and retains the typical Canor look.

Want to turn it on? Just gently touch the round display. This immediately shows a tube, which is complemented by a surrounding „warm-up timer.“ A special gimmick: the symbolically represented tube cathode glows more and more as the warm-up time elapses. Completely superfluous, but very nicely done. And now, dear smartphone refusers, you have to be very brave: the input selection on the A3 is done by „swiping“ on this display. From left to right. Due to the limited size of the touch panel, this doesn't work quite as smoothly as on a modern smartphone, but it is still reliable. Of course, you can also swipe up and down: swiping down reveals an on/off symbol that you can use to put the device into standby mode. Swi-

ping up reveals a dimmer that can be used to change the brightness of both displays. But that's not all. If you swipe right again from here, you'll find a whole range of other settings. For example, you can select a „screensaver“ in the form of a stereo VU meter with pointers or – as in the past – the company logo. You can also configure inputs for home theater loop-through operation, roughly pre-level the inputs (plus three or six decibels), or completely exclude unused inputs from „scrolling.“ The integrated phono section proves to be pleasantly flexible. There are four different gains between 40 and 66 decibels, four capacitance values for MM operation (50 to 400 picofarads), and five impedances for MC operation (10, 50, and 100 ohms, 1 and 47 kilohms). That's something you can work with.

There are no other controls, but there are two headphone jacks: in addition to a classic 6.6-millimeter jack, there is a four-pin XLR socket for balanced connection, which is quite common for high-quality headphones these days.

Teammates

Turntable:

- **Transrotor Massimo Nero / Studio 12"**

Cartridge:

- **Transrotor Figaro**

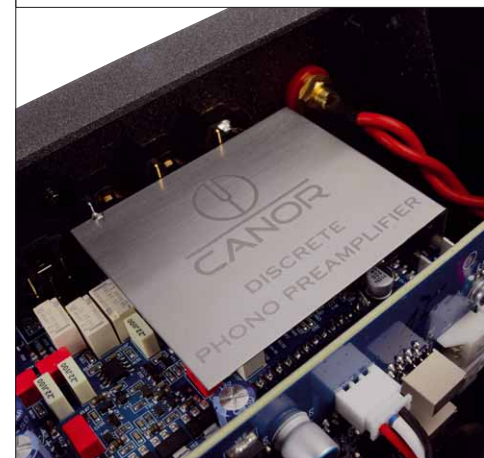
Loudspeaker:

- **Perlisten A4t**

Competitors

Integrated amplifier:

- **D'Agostino Pendulum**



Underneath the metal plate is a channel of the discretely constructed phono section



The Virtus A3 is a packed with high-tech features



What we played

Spacelords
Liquid Sun

Townes Van Zandt
In Pain

Nina Simone
My Baby Just Cares For Me

Steely Dan
Pretzel Logic



*Very nice:
The VU meter mode for the
display in the rotary knob*

A glance at the rear reveals a considerable amount of connection diversity: digital connections can be made via USB-C, two coaxial, two optical, and one AES/EBU jack, which should be enough for all situations—apart from the lack of Bluetooth connectivity. For analog sources, there are two unbalanced and two balanced inputs in addition to the phono connection. Speakers can be connected via China pole terminals of mediocre quality, and we are pleased to see a balanced and an unbalanced preamp output.

Technology

Underneath the insulated and sturdy aluminum cover is an extremely substantial construction. The first thing that catches

the eye is the unusual cooling concept: the two powerful power amplifiers cool their output transistors via a heat pipe system, in which liquid-filled pipes conduct the heat from the semiconductors to the highly effective heat sinks. If I hadn't happened to look under the device, I wouldn't have noticed during operation that there are two fans providing additional convection. The two power amplifier boards each feature one of Canor's well-known shielding cups, and underneath is what makes the amplifier a hybrid design: an E88CC double triode provides the desired level of tube technology. The thick ring-core power transformer is almost completely hidden under the protruding power supply board. The rear panel of the device features chan-

*Richly equipped:
the rear of the device*





The cooling concept uses heat pipes for heat dissipation

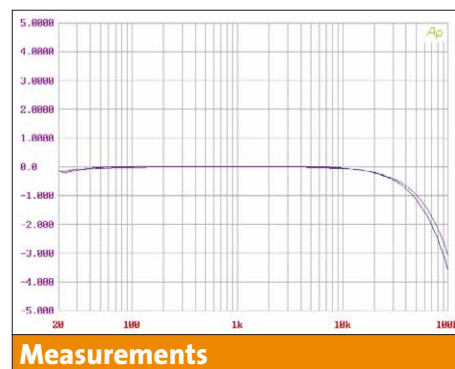
nel-separated input boards, which also house the discrete phono modules, which are shielded from prying eyes by protective plates. The volume control is also channel-separated and sensitive, using state-of-the-art chips, while the digital input side is served by two fine ESS9038 converter chips that can convert everything the digital world has to offer – here too in the finest dual mono configuration.

Phew. That's a lot, and I take my hat off to the designers for fitting all this technology into the certainly not small housing; not a single cubic centimeter of space has been wasted here. The measurement technology confirms the concept; we could not detect any mutual interference.

Listening test

When it comes to speaker selection, the Virtus A3 offers a welcome degree of freedom. The powerful amplifier also tames transducers that like to be kept on a slightly shorter leash.

We opted for the brand new Perlisten A4t, which is currently being tested by our colleagues at HiFi Test and makes quite



Lab commentary

There is also good news to report from the measurement lab regarding the Virtus A3. With 106 watts into eight ohms and 205 watts into four ohms, it proves to be a pleasingly powerful representative of its guild. The frequency response reveals channel equality and linearity up to 100 kilohertz, and the interference voltage and channel separation values are just as good (79.1/74.3 decibels(A) and 78.6/73.2 decibels(A) at one watt at eight/four ohms) as the distortion (0.07/ 0.11 percent). With an idle current consumption of 92.7 watts, the Canor is not exactly energy-efficient, but its power consumption remains within reasonable limits.

a powerful statement. The input side was easy: the Transrotor Figaro in the tried-and-tested Massimo Nero feels right at home at 100 ohms, and as usual, I opted for maximum amplification.

Yep. It can deliver. The three gentlemen from the „Spacelords“ prove this quite clearly with their 2016 masterpiece „Liquid Sun.“ It sounds rich, sonorous, energetic, and emphatic. It's wonderful to hear how meticulously the Canor unravels the deeds of the three performers. The album only has three tracks, but with this setup, they are a rewarding vacation trip into infinite expanses.

Pretty much the exact opposite is the documentation of Townes van Zandt's last European tour in 1994/95. „In Pain“ is a fascinating and harrowing collection of the great songwriter's later moments, and this combination allows us to share in the emotionality of the moment in a powerful way – top notch. Nina Simone demonstrates smoothness and grace, Steely Dan demonstrate a sense of rhythm at the highest level – quite astonishing for such an all-in-one device.

Holger Barske

Canor Virtus A3



- Price
- Distribution
- Phone
- Internet
- Warranty
- Dimensions (W x H x D)
- Weight

6,000 Euro
IDC Klaassen, Lünen
+49 231 9860285
www.canor-audio.de
2 years
435 x 130 x 462 mm
approx. 18 kg



» Canor's brand-new complete package impresses with a powerful and excellent-sounding amplifier section, plenty of functionality, and an original operating concept. One for everything!

ON SITE

Finally, a few impressions from my visit to Canor Audio in spring 2023



The man in the middle is John Westlake and is responsible for many developments at Canor



Canor builds its own enclosures, which results in an impressive metalworking department



Also in-house: EMW measurements for various certifications



SMD components? Canor has plenty of them, and the circuit boards are naturally also assembled in-house



It all started with tube testers, and they are still a big topic at Canor



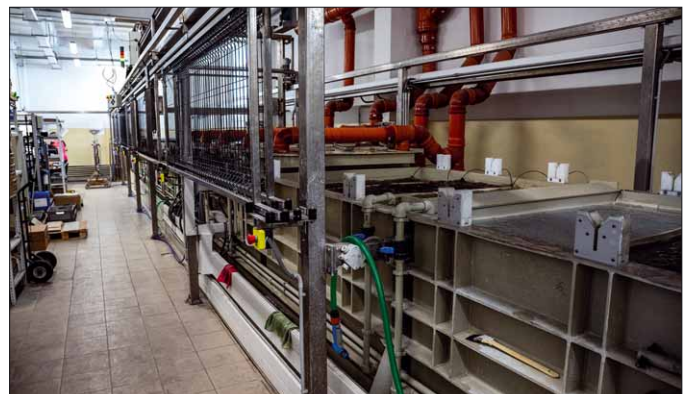
A darkened room helps with functional testing tube devices



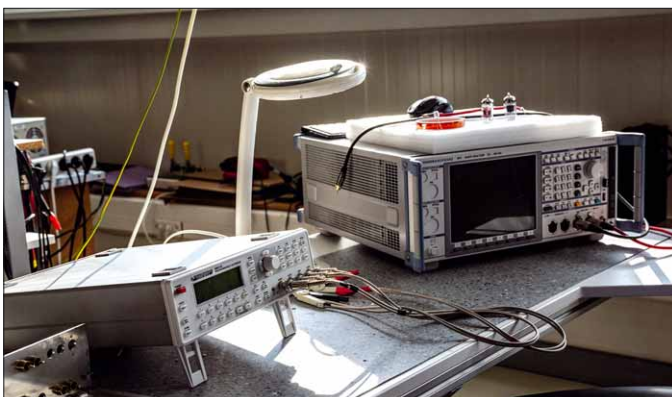
Conventional components – i.e., those with wire connections – are assembled by hand



Canor amplifiers are assembled here



There is even an extensive electroplating facility for housing finishing on site



Measurement technology? Made in Germany and of the highest quality



The in-house listening room. Listening is done with Fink Team speakers