

Cyrus 8vs Integrated Amplifier, CD 8x Player, and PSX-R Power Supply

Half-width components that deliver full-size tube-&-analog-like sound.

In 1984, Mission introduced its Cyrus line of electronics. These components developed an enthusiastic following but were somewhat overshadowed by Mission's own loudspeakers, at least on these shores. Indeed, the last TAS review of any Cyrus product was in 1988, but the Cyrus team has been far from idle. Since that time, Cyrus has continued to evolve its line of high quality, affordable electronics and split from Mission last year to become a separate company. The new entity, Cyrus Advanced Audio and Video Systems, has created a broad, modular line of electronics. When I received the "half-width" Cyrus CD 8x player, 8vs integrated amplifier, and one PSX-R power supply, I wondered just how good these mighty-mites might be.

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Cyrus 8vs Integrated Amplifier

Cyrus power amplifiers via pre-amp outputs while simultaneously continuing to drive the 8vs' internal power amplifier (something few other integrated amplifiers can do) so it can also be used as part of a Cyrus bi/tri-ampli-

original Quads, I thought that the Cyrus was just another in a long line of solid-state components, some much more costly, that didn't mate well with these 'stats. Everything sounded closed down and too polite. I decided to let all the Cyrus components cook for over a week and played background music on them at low volume 24/7. You know what? These babies underwent a total transformation! Think Clark Kent into you know who. The midrange opened up dramatically, the bass was much more forceful, and the highs were more extended. I couldn't believe it was the same system. With the standby feature on the 8vs, you'd be well advised just to leave them on.

One of the Cyrus' greatest strengths is its ability to "get out of the way" and to let the strengths of various types of speakers shine through. For example, the Cyrus didn't impinge on the Quad's glorious midrange but got deeper and tighter bass out of them than my reference tube amplifiers do, so I found that I didn't need a sub-woofer as often. And where some digital/solid-state combos might make the

These new Cyrus 8-series components produced a surprisingly musical sound, making me think, at times, that I was listening to tubes and analog instead of solid state and digital.

instead of solid state and digital. The 8vs integrated amplifier, sporting an array of useful inputs and outputs, offers the greatest flexibility and expandability that I have found among integrated amplifiers, giving away little in this respect to separates. Besides its dual sets of speaker outputs, which allow easy bi-wiring, the 8vs pre-amp section can drive add-on outboard

fictionation solution. Better still, the CD 8x player rivals my reference DAC, particularly when mated with Cyrus' optional PSX-R external power supply. This system's strong musicality, convenience and small footprint, make it pretty compelling.

However, all was not well at first. When I initially hooked the Cyrus system up to my restored and modified

Canton Vento 807 DCs sound bright, the Cyrus components mated extremely well with them, preserving the Vento's signature resolution, transient speed, and top-end extension without skewing their neutral tonal balance. Finally, the Cyrus' performance with the Hyperion HPS-938s was the most "thrilling" of all, since the Cyrus didn't diminish that speaker's explosive and articulate mid-bass—its best attribute.

All-around musicality is my top criterion for judging audio gear, and it is one of the Cyrus 8-series system's greatest strengths. Mated with the Quads, Miles' trumpet on *Sketches of Spain* [Columbia], Coleman Hawkins' sax on *The Hawk Relaxes* [Presitge/Moodsville/OJC], and Sarah Vaughn's voice on *Ballads* [Blue Note] had great musical timbre, a sense of musical rightness and naturalness that

systems—I could listen all day without aural fatigue (and did). The music "breathed" and had a touch of sweetness and warmth.

Yet this musicality does not come at the expense of a loss of clarity or a

recordings through the Cyrus system, such as Ivo Janssen's excellent recording of the Bach *Toccatas* [Void], or Bill Evans's *finest hour* [Verve], because the leading edges of transients were so well maintained. Listen to the mallets striking the tympani on the Berlioz *Requiem* [Telarc] and you'll hear what I mean.

What is the secret to Cyrus' performance? Stuart McGregor, Director of R&D, says that Cyrus products must not only measure well on the test bench, but must pass extensive listening tests, too, and the extra months spent fine tuning these designs really shows. The build quality on these units is superior to that of many units costing far more and a lot of attention has been paid to keeping signal paths short and isolating critical circuits from interference. Each unit in the Cyrus line has the same half-width form factor, with a chassis that is die-cast as a single piece from non-magnetic alloy. Not only does the chassis look good, but it also reduces microphonic effects while shielding the audio circuitry. Another plus is that a Cyrus system, even with a bevy of separate components, takes up very little space.

The 8vs integrated amplifier exemplifies the Cyrus design philosophy. It has the new "vs" (virtual servo) technology from Cyrus' top-of-the-line separate preamplifier, the Pre Xvs. Its remote has many useful features like controls to adjust balance and phase, and the ability to match the sensitivity of all inputs with the CD input. Nice! The 8vs ran as cool as could be with no problems at all, even when one of



Cyrus PSX-R Power Supply

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one hears in a live performance at a jazz club. Because there wasn't a hint of coldness or upper midrange glare—common problems with many digital

blurring of transients, as can happen with some tube-based amplifiers in this price class. Indeed, I really enjoyed listening to solo jazz and classical piano



Cyrus CD 8x Player

Cyrus 8vs Integrated Amplifier, CD 8x Player, and PSX-R Power Supply

- STRENGTHS**
Musicality, natural timbre, and transient speed; ability to drive difficult loads; systems design approach provides great flexibility, expandability/upgradeability, and convenience; build quality and size
- WEAKNESSES**
Not a great match with power-hungry speakers; image depth somewhat foreshortened; advanced remote controller takes some getting used to but is worth it.

my spade-to-banana adaptors lost its grip on the speaker cable and caused a short. The 8vs also accepts an optional intelligent external power supply, the PSX-R, which drives the pre-amplifier section. When I added it, the soundstage became deeper and more three-dimensional and had better resolution. This is a worthwhile upgrade.

Surprisingly, the Cyrus CD 8x player rivaled the musicality of my reference Musical Fidelity Tri-Vista 21 DAC, though it fell a bit short of that standard in terms of resolution and

soundstage depth. However, with the addition of the PSX-R, that gap was almost closed in my reference system and vanished when using the Cyrus integrated. The PSX-R drives the CD 8x's most "noisy" components, like the motors. Again, it's a worthwhile upgrade.

So what's not to like about these small Cyrus components? Unfortunately, they're not the outright bargains they are in the U.K. because of the sagging U.S. dollar. Second, if you're an analog junkie like I am, you'll have to add a phono stage. The 8vs mated beautifully with the separate phono stage of my custom MFA pre-amplifier, but Cyrus also makes a companion phono stage, the Phono X, that looks quite tasty. I'd love to get my hands on one. Third, the keys on the advanced remote controller serve multiple functions, depending on the Cyrus device used, so you'll need to refer to the manual to take full advantage its capabilities. Lastly, the Cyrus system is not the last word in image depth, resolution, or dynamic range, although its performance in each of these areas is more than acceptable.

MANUFACTURER COMMENT

Many thanks for taking the time to look beyond the initial "out of the box" experience. Cyrus is a very unusual audio company for several reasons not least because it is owned by the enthusiasts who have run the business since 1998. Another unusual aspect is that, bucking the industry trend, our board is not pressurised by venture capital bankers demanding unfeasible growth to fund borrowings. Following our MBO in 2005 Cyrus is privately financed and it's this that allows us to specialise and take whatever time is necessary to bring properly finessed projects to market.

Our engineers cut their teeth on the first audiophile CD players in 1988 and more recently the revolutionary DML loudspeaker drive panel of the Cyrus Icon. While we may be the new kids on the North American block, we have in fact a long history of award winning models in Europe.

Our upgrade philosophy is embedded into the range and as you mention in your review, brings many acoustic and financial benefits to the consumer. The concept that one may enter the Cyrus family at an affordable price point and maintain the value of the initial investment through to some seriously capable audio system options is unique. The luxury of upgrading a CD 6s CD player to an 8x and then onto the (forthcoming) CD 8xt transport is unprecedented yet this explanation offers only a single example of the true value of our modular system engineering. Other system options include hard disc audio servers, wireless multiroom controllers, and A/V systems that while providing stunning sonics, can be operated from a single button, our proprietary MC BUS logic control eliminating all the wires, switching and fuss usually associated with the rather negative WAF factor.

We would humbly suggest that we aim to offer U.S. consumers something unique, compact, understated and fine sounding together with a valuable upgrade path. Thank you for opening the first window on Cyrus Audio in the USA.

Peter Bartlett
Cyrus Audio Limited

SPECIFICATIONS

Cyrus 8vs Integrated Amplifier
Price: \$1795
Power output: 70 watts per channel
Number and type of inputs/outputs: 7 line inputs; dual speaker, pre-amp, Mc-Bus, and headphone outputs
Dimensions: 8.5" x 3 x 14.4"
Weight: 12.34 lbs.

Cyrus CD 8x Player
Price: \$1995
Type of outputs: 2-RCA, 1-optical, 1-digital, Mc-Bus
Dimensions: 8.5" x 3 x 14.4"
Weight: 7.7 lbs.

Cyrus PSX-R Power Supply
Price: \$795
Dimensions: 8.5" x 3 x 14.4"
Weight: 10.1 lbs.

DISTRIBUTOR INFORMATION
THE SOUND ORGANIZATION
11140 Petal Street, Suite 350
Dallas, Texas 75238
(972) 234-0182
www.soundorg.com

ASSOCIATED EQUIPMENT
MFA Venusian preamp (Frankland modified); VPI Aries/Graham/Koetsu; Musical Fidelity Tri-Vista 21 DAC; Edge G-4 and Precision Fidelity M-7A (modified) power amplifiers; Hyperion HPS-938, Quad ESL-57s (PK modified), and Canton Vento 807 DC loudspeakers, etc.

Its 70 watts per channel sounds like a lot more but can poop out on some dynamic peaks. If you have power hungry speakers and like to listen at high volumes, you're going to have to bi-amplify the system for more power. This is easily done with the addition of any other Cyrus amplifier, like the Mono Xs, which provide 150 watts per channel.

The performance and price of this Cyrus combo make it hard to justify spending a lot more on a digital system. Not only does it almost disappear physically in your living or listening room, but the 8-series' engaging musicality, expandability, and convenience, as well as Cyrus' history of offering cost-effective upgrades, makes this combination hard to beat. Keep your eyes on these guys. They've been unleashed!