

# SOVEREIGN POWER / SIGNATURE SERIES

*A secretive musician*

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*Even the smaller companies follow the rules of modern marketing and make available a series of information which describe – even from their own perspective – the quality and the design philosophy behind their products. SOVEREIGN'S final amplifier, or to be more precise, the company itself, is the exemption to this rule and adopts a wholly different approach.*

Already from the choice of name – POWER – one understands that its designer was in no mood for idle talk. This laconic predisposition is also expressed on the frame, where the only "talkative" points are two gold – plated recesses engraved on the thick aluminium. On the front side one finds engraved the name of the company and the model while between the two there is a LED indicating the operating mode. The only thing standing out is the ON/OFF round button ( with the logo of the company engraved on it). On top of it, one can read a "statement" explaining that this amplifier was manufactured for the true music lovers and encourages the listeners to relax and enjoy the music. There is also the designer's signature and that's it. On the back, one can find the output pins for the speakers ( of excellent quality) and two pins of input pins ( simple and balanced) And that's where the easy discoveries about POWER end.

## **A little research**

No matter how hard you look for it, the available information about SOVEREIGN is scarce. On its site, the information is, quite simply, non-existent, there is a price list indicating that the manufacturer wants its products to be sold in the same price everywhere, and this is it. If you continue looking, the only other thing you may find is that the people behind this german company are the same who own AARON (the two companies had initially the same name, NEUMANN AUDIOTECHNIK and only later they became two separate entities, AARON and SOVEREIGN). The technical data can also be available but one has to ask for them.

When it comes to details about the circuits of the amplifier, how it was manufactured etc., these are not attainable, and equally unattainable, because invisible, are the screws that would allow you to access the interior of the amplifier. No matter which way you will look at POWER, there is no way to discover how to open its box. After the photographer was finished with the amplifier and returned it to us, we had to give proof of enormous imagination before we managed to discover how one can enter the

amplifier (it is the "legs" of the amplifier which function as the nuts which secure the cover on the bottom of the amplifier, while the surrounding aluminium frame is internally locked).

Until one actually sees the interior, one is excused to think that such secretiveness may be due simply to the fact that there is nothing but thin air inside, so it better stay hidden. But once you're inside, you cannot fathom why the company strives to hide something that anybody else would proudly exhibit.

POWER is a pureblood dual mono amplifier, whose two channels simply share the same frame. Each channel is fed by an amoured toroidal transformer (500 VA) giving voltage to 4 capacitors of 10.000  $\mu$ F per channel (2 x 1 10.000 $\mu$ F per polarity and per channel).

The amplifier's circuit appears to be a painstakingly but classically arranged one, containing a stage of power amplifier with symmetrical differentials at input, a stage of voltage amplification and a stage of current amplification. Even though the semiconductors at the stage of voltage amplification are common ones (series BC), and the same goes for the operational amplifier (NE5534) which ensures the transformation of the signal from each channel's balanced input, the semiconductors (6 per channel) at output are an unknown parameter (their type is carefully erased). Apart from the fact that they have a metallic shell (TO3), and that, based on the quiescent current of the device, they function in Class AB, nothing else can be said with any certainty about them. The power semiconductors are in thermal contact (through aluminium bars) with the totality of the frame which does represent a massive cooling medium, assuring thus a very important thermal inertia (in other words, even after many hours of operation, the interior temperature will remain almost the same). Keeping in mind that the manufacturer strives for this temperature stability, practically explains why the amplifier was constructed to be absolutely sealed.

Moreover, the great attention paid to details such as the use of LED as a source info regarding the tension of the bias circuits of the semiconductors, the excellent quality of the materials used and the great attention paid to the circuits for the smooth switching-on and the protection of the amplifier (the relays of which are not in the same sequence with the musical signal) do complete the picture of a perfectly realised device.

## **Let the music speak**

SOVEREIGN may be secretive but, when it comes to its musical nature, it certainly opens up. During the time we spent with it, we had the opportunity to couple it with different accessories that allowed it to give full vent to its character.

Parcimonious this amp may be regarding its technical sheet, but its main sound characteristics are offered without fuss. Coupled with big volume speakers, like the Ascendo ZF-3, it paints a big picture with a rich ambiance and literally lets the speaker do the talking but without the shade of a doubt that it doesn't retain perfect control over it. The same character persists with speakers more difficult to drive (B&W 802) while in this case its large extent combined with the steady control exercised over the woofers show how the provision of voltage is not at all an issue for POWER. At the same time, its behaviour shows a comfortable management of the potentials involved. This comfortable attitude can be heard both during lasting crescenda and during volume peaks abruptly followed by silence.

POWER is aptly named when we discuss power provision.

This is the first impression during the initial few moments after switching on and it remains after many hours of use, with all additional details simply reinforcing it. This is truly a device that lets you relax and enjoy music.

Something else you realise shortly is that despite the ample power, the delivery has no peaks and not a hint of hardness. On the contrary, and in relation to timbre, this amplifier lets off a silky sensation that reminds one of the best valves but without allowing the euphony to mess with tonal balance. Big orchestras and small ensembles get both the best treatment they deserve. This "airy", spacious impression is pleasantly obvious with the Ascendo ZF-3 which seem to share the same sound worldview with POWER. Its behaviour is also perfectly balanced between the medium and the higher areas of the sound spectrum.

## **Talk is cheap**

POWER amp is a final amplifier which from the point of view of material is characterized by a robust and exemplary construction, while its approach to music is dynamic and transparent. It doesn't dissect the sound into many little bits just to show off its analytical capabilities but it presents an ensemble full of life that allow the listener's senses to enjoy what's happening, without a hint of pressure. This is quite a unique device that earns the listener's trust.