



## AUDIOLAB 8000S

**B**ased on the classic 8000a integrated, this latest modern incarnation is a very versatile beast – at least in its source and speaker switching potential, as the front panel avoids the clutter of tone controls, *et al.* The 'S' arrives with a gamut of line inputs populating the rear: six sets of inputs, in fact, including three tape loops. One should note however, that although one set of outputs are labelled as Video, you will be able to utilise them as a spare set of inputs for other purposes. This amplifier can even act as a preamplifier with bi-amping options, or serve as a separate pre-power amp which will be useful to AV enthusiasts who might wish to add an AV processor: Inside the silver (or black) box, Audiolab has employed extensive heatsinking over several components for durability and reliable operation at high levels over extended periods. The chassis is slim (74x445x335mm) whilst the amplifier weighs in at 8kg.

The visual design is intriguing, offering a retro styling that, apart from the torpedo-shaped on/off switch and large volume knob, is based on three clunky-looking switches that gave me the feeling of running through the launch sequence in a nineteen sixties cold war missile silo! There's something strangely satisfyingly about the 'clunk' that the selector switches make on this amplifier – it's a nice thing to use and to live with.

### SOUND QUALITY

Despite its small £30 price premium over the Marantz, the Audiolab 8000S proved considerably more capable. First, Carol Kidd's vocalisations were considerably more airy

whilst her backing band sounded far less claustrophobic than via the Marantz PM6002. There was also a much wider soundstage that allowed the music to breathe. Treble offered a welcome sense of delicacy on cymbals while mid tones on piano were very clean. Rock performed equally well. Via Can, bass was crisp and detailed with good lower frequencies that never become muddled or confused. Each instrument was picked out with alacrity. That's not to say that the 8000S was clinical in any way but it certainly had a much improved focus over the Marantz.

Turning to vinyl and Kate Bush proved rather more civilised and controlled. Again, both upper mid and treble enjoyed a measure of focus and detail, but there was possibly a little less musicality on this softer track – an interesting point which does highlight the cheaper Marantz's greatest redeeming feature – its musicality. The Yes track was far

more interesting with a very clean and dynamic sound that offered tremendous clarity considering this amplifier's modest position in life. Despite the rather raucous rock arrangement, the 8000S retained its ability to identify each instrument successfully. Also, as space was added to each, the bass guitar, for example, had more room to manoeuvre.

Due to the welcome clarity, vocal harmonies were also more of a delight and offered the choice of listening to a well presented whole or picking out each voice as you pleased. The 8000S has suffered from criticism of a lifting upper-midrange. However, I'd warrant that this wayward element merely confirms that you should be careful in matching this amp with your chosen speakers. The civilised Spondors proved an ideal choice. This is a brightly lit and entertaining performer alright, but providing you match accordingly, you will be impressed.

### MEASURED PERFORMANCE

The Audiolab is a band limited design with a high frequency limit of 31kHz (-1dB). This usually gives a slightly darker palor to treble, but keeps it clean and easy; Naims also band limit heavily. Power output measured 72 Watts into 8 Ohms and 121 Watts into 4 Ohms, enough for high volume in most situations. With a high damping factor of 58 the 8000S should have the firm bass traditionally associated with Audiolab amplifiers.

The distortion pattern remained very constant, mostly second and third harmonic, both in the midband and at high frequencies, with changing load and power levels. This suggests the amplifier will not be tinged by distortion changing in a manner uncorrelated to the music, always a good sign. An input sensitivity of 320mV is useful, if insufficient for low gain external phono stages, and the Audiolab has neither

phono stage nor tone controls onboard.

The 8000S is an uncomplicated design that measures well in all areas and appears able to continue the Audiolab tradition. NK

Power	72 Watts
Frequency response	2Hz-31kHz
Separation	87dB
Noise (indirect/direct)	-104dB
Distortion	0.014%
Sensitivity	320mV
Damping factor	58

### DISTORTION



### VERDICT

Compact in form with a crisp and dynamic presentation, it offers excellent value for money.

### AUDIOLAB 8000S

Audiolab  
 +44(0)845 458 0011  
[www.audiolab.co.uk](http://www.audiolab.co.uk)

### FOR

- detail
- bass response
- dynamic

### AGAINST

- well lit upper midband