

Lyngdorf Audio TDA 2200 and Millennium MK IV

What's up

'There's a new kid in town' ladies and gentlemen or an old kid in new clothes, frankly I don't really care. In any case the time has come for some serious excitement. Two amplifiers from the same father, Peter Lyngdorf, are set-up in my listeningroom. These two hot-shots exhibit a totally different soundpotential compared to what I'm used too and even that perception was turned upside down. Sit and shiver, listen and learn.

The brand Lyngdorf Audio and the (originally released under the TacT Audio brand) Millennium are closely linked to each other. The latter is already more than eight years in production and surprised the hifi-community with a superb performance coupled to an exceptional concept. A group of believers was quickly formed and the brand took hold of a patch of land between other innovative tendencies and firmly holds on to it. Currently in its fourth generation and under a new brandname. As usual there was part of the story that did not make sense, a part where one says "couldn't this be done better?" Well, to a certain extend this was the case, since the amplifier was very expensive and it reduced the number of potential buyers. Wiring money for an amount with four zero's was required to make the amplifier change owner. Today that is still valid for the Millennium, even in euros that defines it as a very expensive amplifier. The MK IV model, present in my listeningroom changes owner for 12000 euro, no pocket money by any means. Thanks to this detour I arrive at the second generation products of the same designer, now carrying its name from day one. The TDA line-up is less expensive, but exhibits some very special qualities. How special remains to be seen, but that's why we're testing these amplifiers.

Peter Lyngdorf

Recently I met the man and it was a joy to experience how enthusiastic one can be for his product, even after all those years. Although a modest man, the warmth he has for his products is crystal-clear. At a demonstration, where he played the music extremely loud without me actually noticing it, I had the chance to chat with him. Despite the loud music. One of the key parameters presented during our short conversation is a matter of pricing. The Lyngdorf TDA line-up is one step back from the Millennium, but not as big as one would expect given the price difference. In other words: relatively little money now offers very good value. He explained that it was his wish to make the product affordable for a much bigger audience. If he succeeds remains to be seen, but he certainly has set some very interesting steps in that direction. A noble wish for these Christmas days. But I really want to hear it.

Action time! Both amplifiers have been set-up in my listeningroom. The Millennium MK IV is more a stand-alone product compared to the TDA 2200 which is part of a complete line-up, intended to be used in the first place as an integrated digital amplifier. A very fine piece of equipment, skillfully built, capable of cranking out some serious power without disappointing is put in the hands of the user. As stated, the finish is just under the Millennium MK IV standard. Equipped with everything need for a good reproduction, certainly if it remains digitally. In essence the amplifier is high quality power D/A converter, capable of delivering 2 x 200 Watt in an 8 Ohm load. All you need as a source is a transport and a digital interlink. A very compact, complete set-up. As stated before, this is a very complete amplifier. When studying the internals of the amplifier in more detail, we find a fully digital amplifier, operating following a class-D principle by making use of PWM modulation. The power output is regulated by regulating the output voltage between few volts and 60 volts. Make no mistake about it, this results in a very powerful amplifier. When playing rather loud the display indicated a volume setting of 75 and according to the supplied power table the amplifier was putting out 1.5 Watt. That leaves you some serious power on reserve. In

essence the amplifier operates as a very high quality power digital-to-analog converter. He does not in anyway underperform my reference player from E-Sound, which I find fits in the same, affordable range of equipment. The 'freaked' player and the Lyngdorf barely leave each other some breathing room, neither one of them can outclass the other one. A very important part of the amplifier is the built-in DSP section, which allows you to generate a plethora of correction filters and activate them. A plethora of correction filters obviously refers to the Lyngdorf filters. And they are very complete.

TDA RoomPerfect™ Module

Sounds nice, must be a gadget you may think, but pricing indicates otherwise. Finally we end up at the main part of our story, the proud revealing of the RoomPerfect™ module. It is an intelligent hardware module including software which makes it very capable, it can do many a thing, I shall return to this extensively. The built-in software is very complex and extremely feature rich if I compare it to what competitors offer. A brief comparison: T&A has a set-up procedure, which in practice is very simple. You put a measurement microphone on your head, sit at your sweetspot, push a button and your done. Lyngdorf takes it much further. Included with the RoomPerfect™ module is a measurement microphone of good quality. The combination of the RoomPerfect™ module and the microphone enables the system to correct a lot of issues automatically. Really, a lot of issues. I'll line up the most important aspects here. Strangely enough, Lyngdorf states that where you measure is of no importance as long as the first measurement is made at you listening position. The minimal number of measurements is clearly defined. The system will not settle for less than five measurements. The Dutch 'Sales Support' Erik van Doorne demonstrated this. After every measurement the 'RoomKnowledge' percentage augmented. After five measurements I was at 90% RoomKnowledge, after that, additional measurements augmented the RoomKnowledge only a little. A few additional measurements concluded the set-up. Done, one would think, not so in this set-up, there are still a lot of options available. Without the intention to cover them all, I'll line up quite a few of them. 'Voicing', this option allows the listener to modify the sound by means of an EQ filter. A recording is played back 'darker' or 'lighter' depending on the setting of the voicing. 'Delay', this allows to compensate for speakers that are not equidistant from the listening position. Very convenient in a living room. However, if both speakers are symmetrical to the listening position this setting can be left alone. Activating the ports to drive a subwoofer can be done via the 'crossover' option, one can then proceed to set-up the built-in cross-over filters of the TDA. First one adds the option, secondly one chooses the cross-over frequency. The suggested cross-over frequencies can be considered as very non-conventional. Usually I will set the cross-over frequency to very low values, somewhere around 40 Hz. The low frequencies will then integrate nicely, the room becomes bigger and sound becomes more analogue. Lyngdorf suggests cross-over frequencies as high as 400 Hz to even 800 Hz, but only in combination with the special Lyngdorf corner woofers! I had to gasp for air when they told me. I could dispute the suggested cross-over frequencies, but have to admit that it sounded fantastic. This roughly summarizes a few of the possibilities this amplifier offers. Continuing to discuss this further would end up in one giant theoretical essay, however, one remarks needs to be made. Upgrading the software is always an option with this type amplifiers and it is also supported by Lyngdorf. Taking the system one step further is also an option. An option I've been defending for a long time, add a second amplifier and one or two woofers. Lyngdorf has an amplifier in its product line-up for this purpose, the SDA 2175. This amplifier mates perfectly with the settings of the TDA 2200 and acts as an extension to the TDA. Price: 1190 Euro. The SDA will drive the two corner woofers, badged W210. The design is completely different from a conventional subwoofer. The units are much lighter and therefore usable at higher frequencies. Be careful, the woofers are designed to be placed in the corners of your room.

Listening

Inevitability announces itself, the part we all work up to, listening sessions. I was very eager to hear this amplifier, mainly because I heard a lot of stories about the design and the full-blown system. I

know someone who has a set built around the most prevalent high-end brands, a status-set that would render every Viagra tablet useless, but nevertheless he switched to the Lyngdorf set. The TDA 2200 was set-up in the listening room and a reference system was prepared to be able to compare them both. During the measurements the sound of the Lyngdorf set improved after every subsequent measurement, widening the gap between the Lyngdorf set and the reference system. A slightly mean character at first disappeared. The room became bigger, instruments became very focused and the high-frequency reproduction was so realistic that cymbals suddenly became very different and realistic. The biggest gain, however, was achieved in the reproduction of the low frequencies, the slight thin lows of the Triangles became full and powerful, creating a firm fundament on which the rest of the music was built. Less powerful recording equally gave the Lyngdorf set the opportunity to present itself at its best. The term subtlety was redefined and only the best of the best Chesky recordings all of a sudden were good enough. Rebecca Pidgeon was extremely beautiful. I haven't met her, but I'm sure, it is true love I feel. The reference system was powered by the Millennium MK IV amplifier. A more modest form of acoustical adaptation had been put in the reference system as well. The main difference between the TDA and the Millennium MK IV is that the latter exercises much more authority. He is the boss and the rest needs to follow, but he can be soft as velvet when required. And then, the full-blown system, consisting of a TDA 2200, the Lyngdorf CD-1 cd-player and a SDA 2175 amplifier to power the two cornerwoofers W210. Add a set of satellites to this set-up and the total set costs less than 12.000 euro, but cabling and main speakers are not included. According to Peter Lyngdorf doesn't make so much of a difference, but I'll be returning to that subject. The system was playing in a big room and that has some effects on the perception, on the other hand try to fill a big room with excellent sound! The latter is something that this set did with panache. The stage was enormous and the impression awesome. What an experience. There was no band playing, but the presentation came very close to achieving just that. Tons of well controlled lows, a wide and high stage that left nothing to desire. Songs that would "boom" on smaller systems, sounded relaxed and were very palpable. Subtle songs were equally impressive, in one word magnificent!

Conclusion

So, there you are. A set-up in your home that you have been stalking the distributor over for more than a half year. You've heard numerous rumors about the system. Usually the real experience is then more down to earth than you're led to believe. Not in this case, this was so much better than anticipated. I can imagine that someone owning a full set-up as described becomes extremely happy. So happy that he tends to forget everything else. The biggest trump obviously is the RoomPerfect™ module, available as an extension to the TDA 2200 costing 1790 euro. That would be the first extension I would buy, maybe only to avoid that it becomes sold out. The rest of the set can then be gradually built-up. A good transport will do, the amplifier operates as a very high quality dac. Just try an old Philips CD Pro of something comparable. Or step-up to the CD 1. Woofers are reasonably priced and can be added per piece (however, for the high cross-over frequencies you need to place them in a stereo set-up). Add a second amplifier, costing 1190 euro, to drive the woofers and then it's just a matter of measuring and setting up the system. Have a listen the day after and then enjoy the system for a very long time. What a product !

Jo Mullers