

The world's most desirable kit

TEMPTATIONS

“Rarely have we heard bass delivered with such resolution”

■ **Gamut D3i/D200i** Pre/power amplifier

■ **£5500/£9300** ★★☆☆★

Gamut: we wouldn't be surprised if you've never heard of the company. It's Danish, and started life under the Sirius brand name back in the early '80s making amplifiers for studio use. But this is a company that has never really shouted about itself, or its products for that matter. That's a shame, because from what we've experienced it makes some very fine components. You can count the D3i preamp and D200i power amplifier among them.

That may be understating the matter somewhat. This pre/power combination is easily one of the best we've heard and - while expensive - is comparable in performance to alternatives that cost Mercedes money.

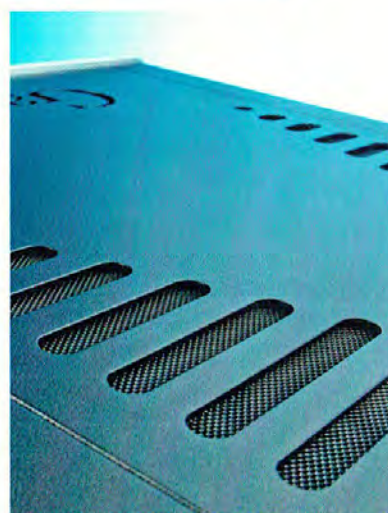
You get what you pay for

A high-end bargain, then? Hardly. £15,000 is still a truckload of money but we certainly see this combination as great value as far as top-end amplification is concerned.

This Gamut pre/power impresses the moment the music starts. It sounds clean, crisp and invitingly clear. Detail resolution is superb; we can't think of a rival that tells us more about the recording. Listen to Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* and the production is laid bare, but not in a clinical way. Low-level information that describes the recording venue is easily heard, making the size and type of acoustic space used obvious. The orchestra is arranged with care and precision, with the placement of instruments pleasingly secure.

More than its imaging capabilities, we're taken by the way this pairing renders instrumental timbre. It's done

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You won't be disappointed by the quality of build on these units - both exhibit the kind of attention to detail and solidity you'd expect at this price

in a natural, unexaggerated manner that separates the sounds of different instruments (playing in the same frequency band) with ease.

Sensitive yet powerful

We love the way the D3i/D200i combination deals with dynamics too. It has the finesse to deliver low-level variations brilliantly, yet given something challenging - Orff's *Carmina Burana*, for instance - it delivers the crescendos with real intensity and force.

There's more to applaud when we play *The Heist* by Macklemore and Ryan Lewis. The music has plenty of drive

here and a surefooted way with rhythms. The Gamuts deliver attack when required yet have no problem easing back with chilled-out tracks such as *Same Love*. We like the way this pairing handles midrange - it's articulate and fluid in a way most other transistor-powered alternatives barely hint at.

Rarely have we heard deep bass notes delivered with such resolution. This pre/power has no trouble discriminating between different bass instruments or notes, nor does it lack anything in agility at low frequencies. We've heard rivals that produced weightier bass (not that the Gamuts are obviously lacking in this

The Gamuts deliver attack when required yet have no problem easing back with chilled-out tracks

See overleaf for more detail...



respect), but little that has so much insight in this region.

Top level top end

Move to the opposite end of the frequency spectrum and you'll find plenty of bite coupled to an unusual level of clarity. The combo's excellent transparency and insight mean poorer recordings are exposed, but unlike much of the competition these amplifiers don't go out of their way to emphasise those flaws. You'll get an honest and balanced account of the recording.

Move away from sound quality and the Gamuts remain on sure ground.

The preamp offers four line-level inputs, including XLR, and the usual option of balanced or single-ended outputs, which are mirrored on the power amplifier



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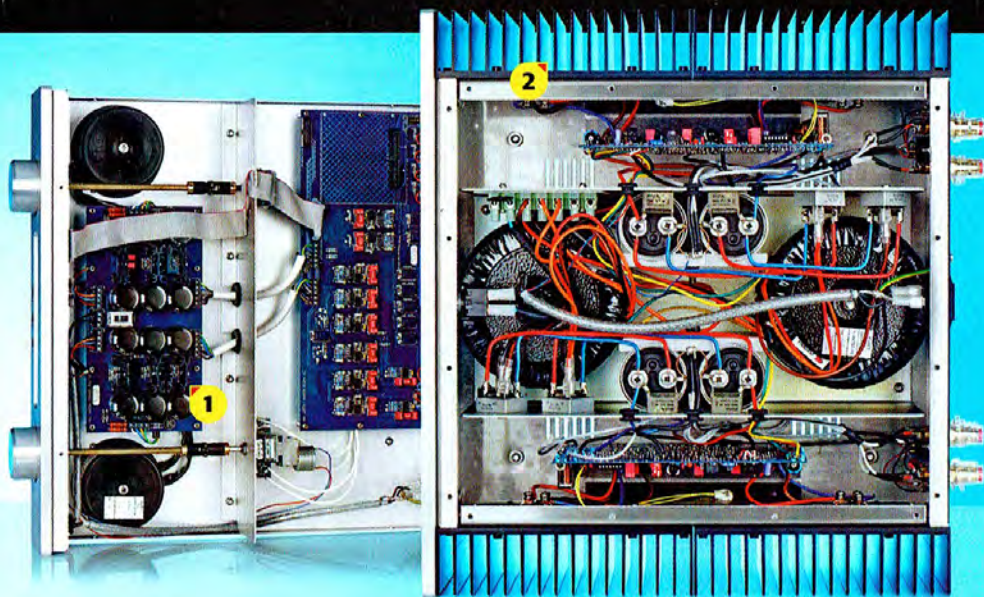
GamuT D3i/ D200i

In detail

The dual-mono design of both units keeps the two channels separate from one another, giving each its own mains transformer and smoothing capacitors. It's a weightier solution than a conventional design and it pushes production costs up, but Gamut considers it worthwhile for the gains in noise reduction and stereo separation.

1 Extending the principle of component separation, the preamp houses its power supply board in a compartment at the front, away from the rear-mounted audio board.

2 The D200i can run at high volume levels without getting worryingly hot thanks to extreme heatsinks.



Build quality is as good as we'd hope for at the price and everything feels as if it will last for years. It's hard not to be impressed by the care taken in construction. These aren't cheap products but it's clear where the money has been spent. Our only complaint concerns the remote handset, a cheap-feeling unit that's not intuitively laid out. Gamut has to do better in this respect.

Don't be fooled by the input marked 'Phono' on the D3i preamp. This is a line-level only unit. There are four inputs (including balanced XLR) and the usual option of either balanced or single-ended outputs. Take a look inside and you'll find a dual-mono configuration right down to the power supplies. The idea is to ensure the two channels don't interact unduly, something that would increase distortion and degrade the stereo imaging. The D3i is a large unit as far as preamps go, particularly when it comes to depth, so make sure your equipment support has enough clearance.

The virtue of simplicity

The D200i power amplifier is a simple affair as far as features are concerned. It mirrors the preamp's balanced and single-ended connections, and has two pairs of speaker outputs per channel to make biwiring a little easier.

Under the cover there's another dual-mono configuration with doubled-up power supplies. Gamut's power amplifiers are unusual in using just a single output transistor per channel rather than combining multiple transistors as in conventional designs. Why do this? The company feels the technical compromises involved in

Benno Meldgaard Engineer



The D3i has the same basic construction as its D3 predecessor, using a balanced, single-ended J-fet input buffer, and a special analogue ALPS Volume potentiometer of only 1 Kohm. This helps keep noise and crosstalk to an absolute minimum. The buffer was chosen for its low levels of noise and coloration. The difference is in the power supply section, which has been further fine-tuned for cleaner, faster power delivery.

The key features of the D3i are its genuine dual-mono construction, with separate toroid transformer for each channel, and a very short, high-quality signal path for a very open and natural sound, with very low distortion.

In keeping with Gamut's key amplifier design philosophy, the D200i uses a single mos-fet [transistor] solution in which one ultra-fast output device drives each channel. We believe multiple devices cannot be absolutely aligned and so smear the sonic signal.

In the D200i we use a new ultra-high current mos-fet that handles up to 500A, together with a balanced power supply with much faster and higher power delivery for a lower noise floor and improved dynamics.

As the icing on the cake, we changed the cabling on both units to our own Wormhole cable, to ratchet the performance up another notch.

combining multiple output transistors are too great.

Muscle to match

The D200i will deliver 220W per channel into eight ohms and 400W as impedance halves. The company also claims 700W per channel into a two-ohms load, which suggests the D200i will be happy driving just about any price-compatible speaker.

There's no shortage of quality high-end pre/power combinations, but we find ourselves deeply impressed by this Gamut pairing. Its transparency and resolution are class-leading and we find its fluidity quite addictive. If you want an honest amplifier that doesn't stamp its signature on the recording too heavily we can't think of a better alternative.

Consider if You value transparency, detail and agility above all else
Highlight We love this combination's insight, subtlety and fluid delivery

GamuT D3i Rating ★★★★★

FOR Transparency and detail resolution; agility; fluid delivery; subtle dynamics; stable and expansive stereo imaging; fine build and finish

AGAINST Poor remote handset

VERDICT If you're looking for an insightful and honest preamp the D3i is an fine place to start

GamuT D200i Rating ★★★★★

FOR Immensely detailed sound; articulate presentation; power; finesse; build and finish

AGAINST If price isn't an issue, nothing

VERDICT One of the finest power amplifiers we've heard. The D200i is both analytical and entertaining; that's a rare combination

TECH SPECS

GAMUT D3i

Type Preamp
Line level in 4
Tape loops 1
Outputs Preamp, XLR
Dimensions (hwd) 11 x 43 42cm

GAMUT D200i

Type Power amplifier
Claimed power 220W
Bridgeable No
Inputs Phono, XLR
Dimensions (hwd) 16 x 43 x 47cm
Weight 34kg