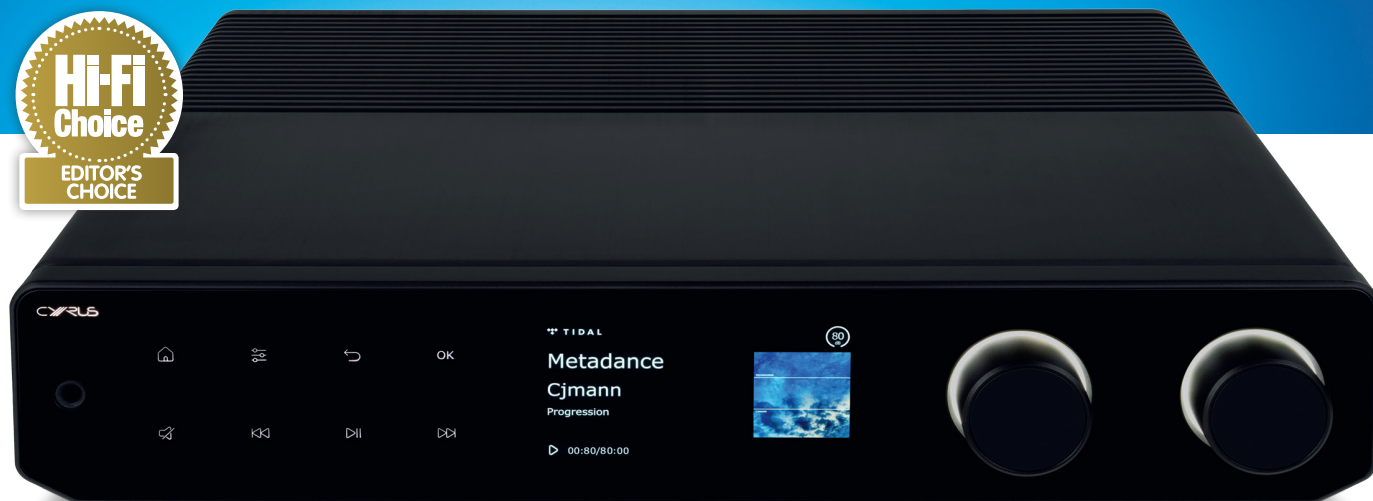




Wide angle

The first full-width Cyrus amplifier offering is a very big deal. **Ed Selley** thinks the British company might be on to something

For most manufacturers, changing the external dimensions of a product is no great shakes. Even relatively small companies will have a back catalogue that spans a few different footprints. Cyrus is not most companies, though. Its incredibly long-lived 'HA7' casework that only ceased production recently housed everything the company built and the 40 Series that first supplanted then replaced it remains half-width.

The 80 Series, then, is a fairly radical departure from longstanding Cyrus tradition. It uses the extra space to both deliver more power and offer more functionality than is possible in a half-width chassis. In amplification terms, the 150W into 8ohm makes it both the most powerful integrated amp and the most powerful stereo Class AB amp it has ever produced. Furthermore, the thick casework acts as a heatsink and means that the 80 AMP does without fan cooling. This power is made available to a single set of usefully sturdy speaker terminals.

The output is coupled to a single XLR input, supported by four RCA ins and a moving-magnet and moving-coil-capable phono stage. There are matching XLR and RCA pre outs as well, so even judged purely as an analogue device it delivers healthy

connectivity. Crucially, though, it's not an analogue-only amp. A digital board built around an ESS ES9039Q2M DAC gives a USB-B input with PCM support to 384kHz and DSD256, supported by two optical and two coaxial inputs as well as HDMI eARC and aptX-capable Bluetooth.

Even then, the 80 AMP isn't done. In a first for any Cyrus integrated, it also includes a BluOS streaming module. This gives you the standard niceties of

Rhythm is delivered with an immediacy that engages on an emotional level

being able to stream a local library (which now includes DSD being read natively in real time, although it's converted to PCM). You also get comprehensive streaming support, a good internet radio implementation and the customary excellent multiroom to boot. Something worth noting that's unusual is that an 80 AMP costs less than a 40 AMP and 40 ST pairing even before the bigger amp, balanced input and more comprehensive phono stage is taken into account.

This formula of 'crypto all-in-one system' is something we've seen a few

► DETAILS

PRODUCT
Cyrus 80 AMP
ORIGIN
UK
TYPE
Integrated amplifier
WEIGHT
20kg
DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
446 x 88 x 385mm
FEATURES
• Quoted power output: 2x 150W (8ohm)
• Analogue inputs: 4x RCA; RCA MM/MC phono; XLR
• Digital board with: USB-B; 2x coaxial; 2x optical; HDMI eARC
• BluOS streaming module
DISTRIBUTOR
Cyrus Audio
WEBSITE
cyrusaudio.com

times before and the 80 AMP has more than a few notional rivals. However, there are details to how Cyrus has gone about implementing BluOS here that puts it in a slightly different space. The BluOS module is effectively run at line level, sending commands to an analogue preamp adjusting volume in the analogue domain. Input and volume selection can be made via the app exactly as you might expect, but the command is being sent from the module to act on the preamp. This allows the 80 AMP to run analogue inputs exclusively in the analogue domain with no requirement for A-D conversion (although it also does this to allow its output to be available to other BluOS devices).

An unavoidable side effect of this is that the 80 AMP doesn't feel quite as slick and responsive as devices that use their modules as central control points, but it works perfectly logically. It also means that when you use an analogue input, the Cyrus feels like a classic integrated amp. In a perfect world I'd have liked direct input selection (and the nature of the module being present means it will always start on the module input so you can start the Cyrus over network), but the 80 AMP is a pleasure to use in the time it's here on test.

The chassis that all this comes wrapped in is less divisive than something as different from the rest of the company's output might have been. Thanks to the arrival of the 40 Series and then having the 80 Series pop up at shows and events for a while before it actually launched, the result doesn't feel as drastically different as you might expect. By carefully keeping styling cues from the 40 Series and ensuring that two



40 Series components can sit atop the 80 AMP means it appears visually cohesive. It's exceptionally well bolted together and feels worth the price.

Sound quality

This is an effortlessly powerful amp, delivering potency beyond the bald numbers when matched with our resident Kudos Titan 505 (HFC 451) standmounts, which proved a stretch for the 40 AMP (HFC 526). Here the extra heft of the larger amp grips them in an utterly convincing way. The 80 AMP doesn't simply power the Kudos, it drives them.

Give it *The Turning Of Our Bones* by Arab Strap over Qobuz Connect, and its urgent rhythm is delivered with a deftness and immediacy that engages on an emotional level. It's never relentless or forced, there is simply effortless grasp of the material. If you ask for something altogether more relaxed like Poppy Ackroyd's *Liminal*, the Cyrus changes tempo to suit, but keeps the fundamental agility.

In years gone by, this fleetness of foot was partially achieved by limits to the out-and-out bass depth on offer. Ever since the short-lived but extremely capable XR model amps, Cyrus has managed to keep the speed up while hitting hard at the same time. The huge electronic sounds of *Inferno* by Boards Of Canada are properly and impressively weighty; felt in the chest as well as heard. This is complemented by accurate and beguiling tonality as well. Eighties-tinged *Days* by The Mountain Goats sees John Darnielle's distinctive voice reproduced with compelling realism.



The 80 AMP shares its core features with NAD's M33 V2 (HFC 542) and Roksan's Caspian 4G integrated, and costs more. It lacks both the option of Dirac of the NAD and Roksan's MaestroUnite software. Judged as a crypto all-in-one system, the NAD is better while the Roksan is much cheaper. The thing is, though, the Cyrus is a better amplifier and its performance with vinyl is vastly superior to its rivals. The 80 AMP is a superb example of a British hi-fi amp equipped with the functionality needed to work in the modern world. It's an exceptional combination.

Used via the BluOS module or the USB-B input, the 80 AMP puts in a fine showing, demonstrating a sonic approach that is fractionally different to other designs built around the same hardware. Where the Cyrus radically steps up a gear is when you roll the input selector to the analogue end of the connections. The moment that the phono stage is able to put in a showing, the 80 AMP demonstrates that it really isn't an all-in-one system.

Let the Cyrus loose with the gently demented *Mutiny After Midnight* by Johnny Blue Skies (more regularly known as Sturgill Simpson) and *The Dark Clouds*, and the results are simply outstanding. Some of the

The 80 Series is a radical departure from longstanding Cyrus tradition

qualities that make the current 40 PPA (HFC 531) one of the best phono stages going – not least the absolute absence of background noise, which results in exceptional detail retrieval – ensures that the 80 AMP can bring the same balance of urgency and punch to what you hear, and the results are spellbinding. I don't feel there is any intrinsic performance downside to digitising an analogue signal as many of the 80 AMP's rivals do, but I also cannot argue that by doing things the 'old-fashioned' way the Cyrus is some way clear of them.

What I find so clever about this is that the 80 AMP still does all the things

that people expect these inarguably pricey devices be capable of doing. Finish your record and flick the TV on and it will uncomplainingly handle the demands of your viewing, proving no more demanding to use than a £200 soundbar. You can AirPlay to it, use it to explore some of the wilder ends of global internet radio output and generally tinker, and it's as tractable and user-friendly as anything else with the same software platform.

Conclusion

By treating the software as an addition to an integrated amp rather than the core of an all-in-one, Cyrus has built a truly spectacular product – one that can trade blows with pretty much any integrated amplifier under 10 grand while being utterly undemanding to live with. The 80 AMP might feel like a radical departure for Cyrus, but the reality is that it's a truly outstanding modern amplifier and an absolute must audition as a result ●

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY

★★★★★

LIKE: Superb sound quality; formidable spec; excellent build

VALUE FOR MONEY

★★★★★

DISLIKE: Not as fast to operate as some; no direct input selection

BUILD QUALITY

★★★★★

WE SAY: Cyrus' biggest amp is also its best. A compelling blend of performance and functionality

FEATURES

★★★★★

OVERALL

★★★★★