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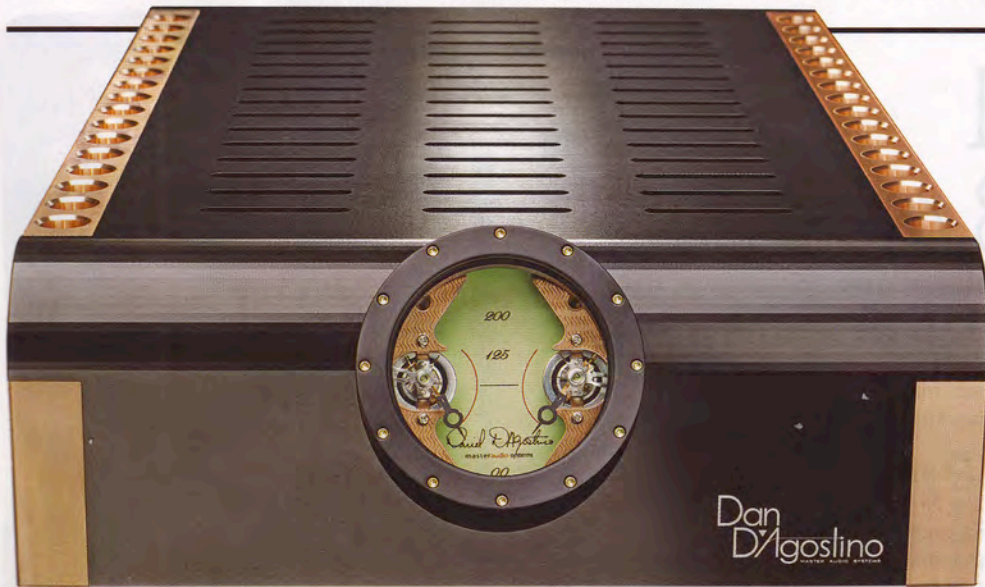
• **TURNTABLES, TONEARMS & CARTRIDGES** Air Tight to Thorens • **OUTBOARD DACS** Arcam to T+A
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UK £4.50 US \$10.99 Aus \$10.50




**AUDIO
FILE**

Stereo power amplifier. Rated at 200W/8ohm
 Made by: D'Agostino LLC, Connecticut, USA
 Supplied by: Absolute Sounds Ltd
 Telephone: 0208 971 3909
 Web: www.dagostinoinc.com; www.absolutesounds.com



D'Agostino Momentum Stereo (£23,500)

We had the world scoop review for the D'Agostino Momentum monoblocks [HFN Jul '11]; the stereo amp prompts feelings of *déjà vu* but there's a new black finish and the front meter now measures the behaviour of two channels. This simply looks better – we think – than the silver, and the copper heatsinks and venturis running the length of the chassis complement the black well.

Those venturis deal with the heat from the banks of output devices,

'The Sophias shook their booties in a languid, almost salacious way'

but the unit never got as hot as the monoblocks. Dan D'Agostino explained that the stereo uses 'the same circuit. The only difference is that it employs fewer output devices, reducing the output from 300W/ch to 200W/ch.'

That explains why they sound so close. Which made it both easy and tough to assess: 'easy' because we so vividly recall the

monos, but tough because they're almost *too* similar. We used a variety of preamps – this only accepts balanced signals via XLRs – including the McIntosh C2200 and C22 Commemorative, fed by the Musical Fidelity kW25 transport/DAC and driving Wilson Sophia 3s. The meters barely moved, even when the levels approached the silly. This amp dispatches Sophias with ease.

ENHANCED 3D

After a run-in period, switching on from cold revealed it to need mere minutes to deliver nearly all of its performance. With *The Best Of Elvin Bishop* [Polydor] – a disc heavily balanced toward funk elements, the sort of thing that makes

'pace, rhythm and timing' addicts swoon – the Stereo dug deep into the Sophias, making its woofers shake their respective booties in the most soulful, lusciously languid, almost salacious way, without ever sounding sloppy.

'Struttin' My Stuff' is the best example of this, with snappy bass, keyboards that have a harmonium's tinkle and crisp drumbeats. The

ABOVE: Dan's inspired-by-watches vision continues: the Stereo, needing two needles, mirrors what horologists call 'retrograde' hands – travelling in an arc, not a circle. Inputs are XLR only; speaker terminals are close-set, needing care with bare wires or 4mm spade adapters

Stereo separated the instruments into layers in front of the listener – almost 'enhanced 3D', but it served to showcase every instrument. Lovers of vocals would delight in the interplay between the near-falsetto of Mickey Thomas and Elvin Bishop's growlier delivery, the amplifier balancing utterly disparate textures with the deftness of a Rothko.

The Stereo exhibits wall-to-wall and floor-to-ceiling cohesion. Within that panorama, you can pick out every sound, and focus on it to your ears' content. This is an amplifier for the fastidious, but who also need (or crave) dynamic slam to temper the subtlety. It could, indeed, be all things to all men/women.

And that's why we dug out something equally 'huge' but demanding absolute finesse. Etta James's breathtaking cover of The Eagles' 'Take It To The Limit' graces that song with a gospel backing group, blues guitar, a grand piano in every sense of the word. It grows and swells to relentlessness, and the Stereo grows with it... For any amp to do justice to Etta's pipes, it's gotta have both power and clarity in abundance. The Stereo could have been *made* for her. As for The Temptations' 'The Way You Do The Things You Do', well – we'd never heard the brass sound so shiny. It could be this amp's anthem.

VERDICT

It seems absurd to call this 'a bargain', but in some systems, the Stereo may even be preferable to the monos. Combine sublime sound, a sense of unlimited power on tap and looks that beggar the term 'heart-stopping', and you have the most exciting and desirable solid-state amplifier on the planet. ☺

HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Power output (<1% THD, 8/4ohm)	240W / 390W
Dynamic power (<1% THD, 8/4/2/1ohm)	300W / 550W / 970W / 1.3kW
Output impedance (20Hz–20kHz)	0.28–0.29ohm
Frequency response (20Hz–100kHz)	+0.0dB to –1.9dB
Input sensitivity (for 0dBW/200W)	174mV / 2470mV (balanced)
A-wtd S/N ratio (re. 0dBW/200W)	90.8dB / 113.8dB
Distortion (20Hz–20kHz, 10W/8ohm)	0.07–0.10%
Power consumption (Idle/Rated o/p)	99W/690W
Dimensions (WHD)	318x109x470mm