

D'AGOSTINO PROGRESSION INT.



ABOVE: Fully loaded, the amp offers four balanced line ins on XLRs, one MC phono and a line in on RCA. Antenna [left] is for the BT remote, the other for wireless Wi-Fi alongside Ethernet, USB-B, coaxial and optical digital ins. Outputs include 4mm speaker binding posts, one balanced pre out (on XLRs) and a 6.35mm headphone out

on 1/2-track, 15ips tape. This has no catalogue number, but the selection is mainly classical, including a superb version of Mouret's *Rondeau*, a brass performance that exploited the Progression Integrated's speed, attack and undeniably dazzling command of transients. The clarity alone was enough to endear this to veteran D'Agostino fans, but even more impressive were the openness and the soundstaging – specialties of the tape label.

FULL FAT

Because such tapes seem to make everything sound better than it should, I turned to CDs to counter any unfair advantages open-reel bestowed upon the Progression Integrated. *The Band* [Capitol/Universal UICY-40185] is one of those Ultimate HQ/MQA discs that you have to import from Japan at great cost, but they sound so good that they're hard to resist.

Via the Progression, Levon Helm's drumming sounded perfectly fat and thwack-y throughout, while the nasality of the vocals on 'Up On Cripple Creek' had a realism that almost matched the vinyl from the 50th anniversary reissue.

While the Momentum Stereo still offers a perceptible, added measure of control and extension, the Progression Integrated isn't far behind. It is, for so many reasons, arguably no less rewarding, in the

hoped-for manner of a less-expensive model relative to a dearer unit in a catalogue. Which is as it should be.

Running them side by side, the Progression Integrated's amplifier section is undoubtedly less bold, less forceful than the costlier Momentum Stereo. But the differences were so minute as to cause a bit of head scratching. I had to keep reminding myself of the Law of Diminishing Returns, acknowledging that the Progression customer is not the same as the Momentum client.

It was the subtlety of George Benson's guitar work on *The Other Side Of Abbey Road* [A&M Records 82839 3028 2] that showed how two amplifiers from the same designer can sound different, yet share common ground.

Sorry about this, folks, but an analogy from the world of wine best illustrates this: the Progression Integrated is to the Momentum what 'second growth' wines are to Premier Cru. For someone like me, who can't afford £800-a-bottle reds, there are, blessedly, plenty of astounding second growths. So, for you teetotalers: the Progression Integrated is to the Momentum what *Le Volte* is to *Ornellaia*. And that spells 'Bargain'. ☺

HI-FI NEWS VERDICT

Like I said, put preconceptions to one side: I expected a brutal, commanding martinet of an amplifier, yet the D'Agostino Progression Integrated proved to be as listenable as my preferred valve alternatives. Free of fatigue-inducing nasties up top, and with rich and warm lower registers, it's a component that will win hearts as much for its jewel-like form as it will for the performance. A Momentum for the masses!

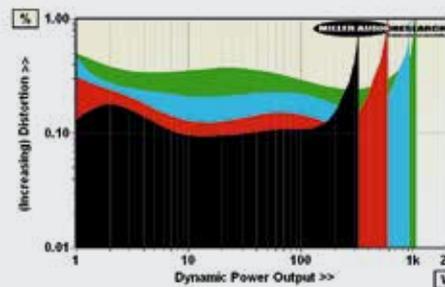
Sound Quality: 85%



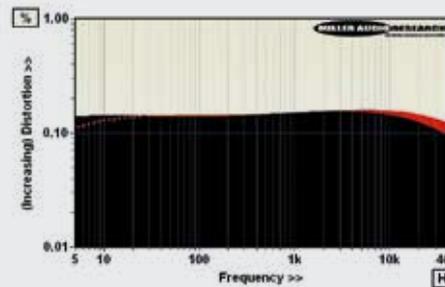
ABOVE: As supplied with the Progression preamp [HFN Apr '18], this chunky BT remote offers volume, balance, mute, polarity and (analogue) input selection

All amplifiers tested in *HFN* are subject to an accelerated (and fully automated) 30 minute burn-in – in this instance the hottest section of the Progression Integrated's heatsinks reached 50°C while the technical performance stabilised after ten minutes with distortion increasing from 0.10% to 0.19% (1kHz/10W/8ohm). Under likely listening conditions the heatsinks will run cooler and distortion will settle closer to 0.15% – a figure maintained very broadly with both frequency and output level over the amplifier's 200W/8ohm rated range [see Graph 2, below]. So while distortion is not especially low, with extended 3rd/5th/7th odd-order harmonics, it is impressively consistent (unchanging) with both volume and content. This is partly a feature of the limited feedback applied, as is the moderate 0.33ohm output impedance, and gently rolled-off treble reaching -0.75dB/20kHz and -8.2dB/100kHz.

The stepwise volume control operates in ±0.5dB steps over the top 33dB of its range, then ±1dB over the next 17dB (-50dB volume) before offering a coarser ±2dB over the final 20dB of its span (maximum range is 71dB). Overall gain is a sensibly modest +31.7dB and the A-wtd S/N ratio just a little 'above average' at 88.1dB (re. 0dBW). But the Progression Integrated's trump card is *power* – its 200W/8ohm and 400W/4ohm spec, beaten on the bench at 2x265W and 2x425W, respectively. Under dynamic (music-like) conditions there's a further boost with momentary outputs of 325W, 600W, 930W and 1030W into 8, 4, 2 and 1ohm loads. Note that under dynamic conditions distortion is *higher* at low power and also increases uniformly when driving lower impedance loads [see Graph 1, below]. PM



ABOVE: Dynamic power output versus distortion into 8ohm (black trace), 4ohm (red), 2ohm (blue) and 1ohm (green) speaker loads. Max. current is 32.1A



ABOVE: Distortion versus frequency over an extended 5Hz-40kHz range (1W/8ohm, black; 10W/8ohm, red)

HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Continuous power (<1% THD, 8/4ohm)	265W / 425W
Dynamic power (<1% THD, 8/4/2/1ohm)	325W / 600W / 930W / 1030W
Input sensitivity (re. 0dBW/200W)	75mV / 1060mV
Output impedance (20Hz-20kHz)	0.315-0.345ohm
Freq. resp. (20Hz-20kHz/100kHz)	+0.0 to -0.75dB/-8.2dB
A-wtd S/N ratio (re. 0dBW/200W)	88.1dB
Distortion (20Hz-20kHz; 0dBW)	0.14-0.16%
Power consumption (idle/rated o/p)	125W / 830W (35W standby)
Dimensions (WHD) / Weight	432x178x432mm / 26kg