

Icon Audio Stereo 60 MkIII m KT150 Signature

The largest integrated in Icon Audio's wide range of amplifiers, the Stereo 60 MkIII had just been revised when we tested it [*HFN* Apr '12]. It began shipping with the (then) new-ish Tung-Sol KT120 tubes and featured improved transformers. Now it has been revised once more, available with the even bigger KT150 Tung-Sol valves manufactured in Russia by New Sensor. And the 'm' in the nomenclature signifies it now includes a (fascia) bias setting meter. Output valve idle current is adjusted via trim pots set into the top plate.

Its Class A front-end employs two 6SL7 triode first stage tubes, with two 6SN7s used as drivers, while the output stage can be switched between ultralinear and triode modes. Internal assembly is entirely point-to-point, the only circuit board being a small one for the remote control to drive the amp's ALPS motorised potentiometer.

The 'stock' 60 III m provides the biggest bang for your buck at £2600. However, in this premium-priced 'Signature' version various components have been upgraded by designer David Shaw to include, for example, copper foil in paper caps.

A POWERFUL BASS

This KT150-equipped Signature amp sounded immensely confident and relaxed, delivering the 'richest' and deepest bass performance of all

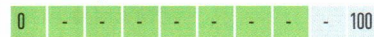
RIGHT: Front panel has bias meter, standby, tape monitor and ultralinear/triode mode switches. The copper-plated top plate looks great



the amplifiers in this month's test group. The evocative bass pedals in *Lifesigns* were really powerful and extended, while the bass and drums in the tracks from Shelby Lynne and Carl Verheyen had impressive punch and drive. But where the Canor and PrimaLuna amplifiers sounded fresh and alive this Stereo 60 Signature sounded a tad thick and lazy. With the hi-res Mozart recording leading edge transients appeared blunted and dynamic shading softened.

In 'Just A Little Lovin' the voice of Shelby Lynne appeared rather unfocused. The holographic imagery of the Stereo 60 we observed last time around seemed to elude this particular Signature sample. It sounded a little more vivid in ultralinear mode than in triode mode but in our test system a bit more sparkle and vibrancy would have been appreciated.

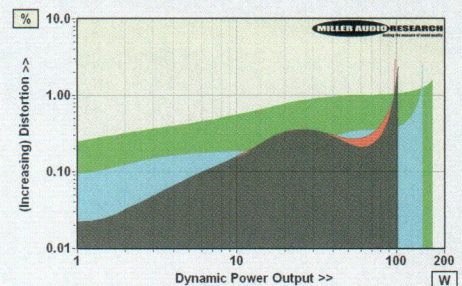
Sound Quality: 75%



ABOVE: Three line inputs – four with the tape monitor loop – are provided. High/low sensitivity switch at rear allows the integrated to be used as a power amplifier

HI-FI NEWS LAB REPORT

The most substantial amplifier in our test is also the most powerful, although Icon Audio's 85W specification for its Stereo 60 MkIII m Signature (with KT120 or KT150 output tubes) was only just met on test into both 8/4ohm loads at 2% THD. There's sufficient headroom, however, to accommodate 100W, 100W, 145W and 170W into 8, 4, 2 and 1ohm loads under dynamic conditions [see Graph, below]. Distortion is slightly lower under continuous power at 0.04%/1W to 0.09%/10W and 0.12%/70W (all at 1kHz into 8ohm) while the hefty LDT output transformers keep distortion very low indeed at bass frequencies (0.12%/20Hz/10W). We've seen these output transformers used before [*ST40* MkIII m, *HFN* Mar '13] and the *ST60* MkIII m shares the same low (by tube standards) 0.8-1ohm output impedance, offering an extended response that's flat from 4Hz-20kHz (-0.5dB). The only quibbles with our sample concerned a poorer-than-expected S/N on the left channel (80dB, re. 0dBW) and weak stereo separation of 30dB at high frequencies. **PM**



ABOVE: Dynamic power output versus distortion into 8ohm (black trace), 4ohm (red), 2ohm (blue) and 1ohm loads (green)

Power output (<2% THD, 8/4ohm)	87W / 85W
Dynamic power (<2% THD, 8/4/2/1ohm)	100W / 100W / 145W / 170W
Output impedance (20Hz-20kHz)	0.75-1.05ohm
Frequency response (20Hz-20kHz)	-0.05dB to -0.52dB
Input sensitivity (for 0dBW/85W)	115mV / 1075mV (Low sens mode)
A-wtd S/N ratio (re. 0dBW/85W)	79.7dB / 99.0dB
Distortion (20Hz-20kHz, 10W/8ohm)	0.023-0.20%
Power consumption (Idle/Rated o/p)	220W / 413W
Dimensions (WHD) / Weight	430x230x380mm / 35kg