

Headphone Amplifier for Balanced Drive Fascinated by High S/N Ratio and Overwhelming Drive Power Text by Yoshio Obara



The new Headphone amplifier, just launched by Aurorasound, has an aluminum chassis encased in a wooden cabinet, which creates an aura of mid-century-like old-timer. The new model is HEADA.

The most noteworthy characteristic of HEADA is that the amplifier's circuit is designed with balanced BTL architecture enabling a powerful drive of even low-impedance headphones. In order to maximize the benefits of the balanced BTL, it is equipped with balance-type headphone output terminals accommodating 4-pin XLR or two 3-pin XLRs. The fact that Aurorasound offers a service of modifying to 4-pin XLR indicates how serious the company is with this particular feature. (The models having exchangeable cables, L & R will become symmetrical configuration. A list of adoptable models will be announced in the company's homepage soon) It should be noted that an output terminal for unbalanced standard headphones is also provided, therefore, users can fully enjoy superb performance and benefits of HEADA.

The pre-amplifier stage is of a discrete circuit design with use of transistors and FETs. It has 4 "Aurora Amp Module" units. These modules are energized by a power supply with a toroidal power transformer coupled with low noise/low impedance regulator. There are two inputs, one of which is balanced/unbalanced. The output is of throughout, therefore, it does not permit to use as a preamplifier. However, it is feasible to use this model with an external pre-main amplifier.

Functionality is excellent. HEADA's design philosophy is to accommodate any type of headphones by featuring not only an input selector, but also a high/low gain control. HEADA's precision design can be recognized by machine-tooled RCA jacks with rhodium-plated, XLR output terminals manufactured by Neutrik, and solid metal insulators. The design is meticulously detail oriented.

The first listening evaluation was done by connecting Ultrazone Edition8 to the standard plug. Output from the CD player was plugged into INPUT-1 (balanced connection) and Gain Control was set at LOW position. The combination of a large conductive-type potentiometer with aluminum knob transmits a high-quality feeling to users' fingers when adjusting volume level.

