

VAC 160i SE Integrated Amplifier

There were plenty of impressive big buck big scale big thrill systems in the Venetian Tower, but the two rooms that really touched my soul were two smaller rooms with a more intimate yet amazingly robust sound. The first included the VAC 160i SE integrated amplifier, DCS Puccini CD/SACD player, Dynaudio C2 Platinum Loudspeakers, Brinkmank Bardo Turntable and 10.5 Arm, Pi Cartridge and all Shunyata wire.

I put the system through the paces with my ripped CD of some familiar audition tracks (yes, I am that guy—sorry). I was immediately taken back by the vast layers of rich detailed harmonics and natural sound at all frequencies. Highs had just the right amount of sparkle and speed with no edge. Mids were warm and seductive with a never ending amount of texture and bloom. I was amazed by the bass performance with plenty of slam and weight. I looked around the room to make sure that there was no subwoofer hiding in a corner (that was unfortunately the case in another unnamed system).

Obviously each individual component played a part, but my suspicions were that the VAC 160i SE (\$17,700) was a critical contributor. A speaker manufacturer once confided in me that they used the 160i for initial speaker placement for some of their most expensive systems in the field. As a one box multi-tasker, it was easy to set up and move when needed. It wasn't long before he realized that this design could compete with some of the best separates at a fraction of the price.

The 160i is not a new player in the game, but VAC separates are held in such high esteem and are used in so many elite systems, that the 160i has not received the press and the praise that it so rightly deserves. At 85 watts per channel, it is a true triode tube amplifier with an optional moving magnet phono stage. Trickle down technology and circuit design from the cost no object Statement amplifiers have been utilized. The SE (Special Edition) includes upgrades for the input transformer and several additional passive components. There is no question that this is a strong contender and should be at the top of your audition list!

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VAC 160i & System



VAC 160i