

POWER AMPLIFIER

Stereo power amplifier. Rated at 160W/8ohm
Made by: Gryphon Audio Designs ApS, Denmark
Supplied by: Harmony HiFi, Welwyn Garden City, UK
Telephone: 01707 629345
Web: <https://gryphon-audio.dk>; www.harmonyhifi.co.uk
Price: £39,995

AUDIO FILE

hi-finews
OUTSTANDING
PRODUCT

Gryphon Antileon Revelation

Auteur of hi-fi's high-end, Danish brand Gryphon has employed the Antileon name for some 32 years. Now in its fourth generation, the current Antileon is truly a revelation!
Review: **Mark Craven Lab: Paul Miller**

Gryphon's Antileon Revelation is the latest iteration of a power amplifier series that began in 1995 with the original Antileon, and has since progressed through Signature, EVO and Anniversary editions. Priced just shy of £40,000, and weighing 90kg, it has all the hallmarks of a flagship model, although in the Danish manufacturer's catalogue it sits one below the aptly titled Apex, a flagship that's more than twice the price and twice the weight.

Still, having heard the Antileon Revelation in action, I can assure you this amp is no 'runner-up prize'. Nor is it simply a case of trickle-down design – the Antileon series, which succeeded Gryphon's debut DM 100 amplifier [*HFN* Dec '92], has long been the standard bearer of the brand's signature solid-state 'Pure Class A' approach. Instead, you might call the Apex, plus previous 'cost-no-object' Gryphon projects like the 1990s REF One monoblock, 'trickle-up' models.

DOUBLING DOWN

A fully dual-mono design, down to separate 15A mains inputs for each channel, the Antileon Revelation claims a power output of 2x160W/8ohm, doubling into 4ohm and reaching a suggested 620W into 2ohm loads – figures that were comfortably exceeded in PM's independent Lab Tests [see p49]. And should you desire more juice, or to separate your channels completely, the amplifier can be purchased in monoblock form, where its rated output rises to 1x180W/8ohm (1x360W/4ohm).

Our inside shot [see pic, opposite] shows the Antileon's symmetrical layout. For each channel there are 20 bipolar output transistors, the same specification as those in the Apex, and 350,000µF of 'ultra-low-ESR' reservoir capacitance. Separate hand-wound 1.15kVA transformers

RIGHT: Two transformers [top] serve PSUs [bottom] for this dual-mono amplifier. Ten pairs of bipolar Toshiba output devices (per channel), driven by a balanced voltage gain stage, are mounted onto two sets of 'winged' heatsinks


are housed in shielded epoxy-damped enclosures. Signal and power wiring is via silver cable, and the amp's double-sided copper printed circuit boards are said to be of 'military' specification. A third power supply handles the Antileon Revelation's digital elements, including its microprocessor-driven protection circuits and front panel display.

All this high-quality engineering is wrapped in an equally high-quality black alloy chassis, its sides dominated by large, sculpted heatsinks. The main enclosure is constrained-layer damped for resonance control, and

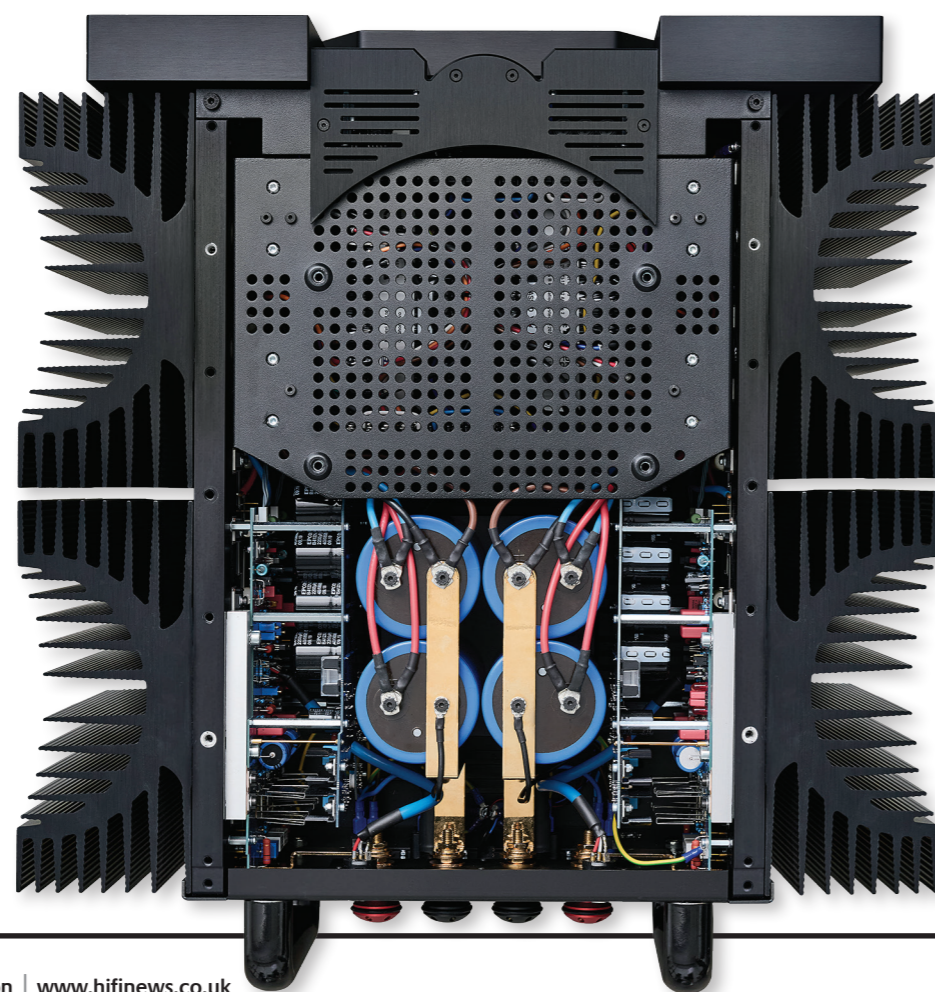
supported by four spiked, conical feet that locate into circular coasters. Gryphon sells its own dedicated StandArt amplifier support (priced from £3550), again

utilising constrained-layer damping and with customisable height and shelf options.

CLASS ACTS

Much of the Antileon Revelation's manual, beyond ventilation warnings, concerns its user-selectable Class A bias. There are three options here (Low, Mid and High), chosen by buttons below the amplifier's front panel display. Next to these are Mute and Check options, 

'Its case includes constrained-layer damping for resonance control'



'Purposeful, avant-garde styling is a hallmark of Gryphon's flagship amplifiers'

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the latter allowing you to see the status of the amp's various diagnostics, such as temperature and channel status, etc.

The Low bias mode is not recommended for critical listening but serves to 'keep the circuitry in the amplifier ready for listening without initial warm-up'. Note that it still draws more than 150W from the wall [see PM's boxout, below], so perhaps that standby button is not entirely redundant.

Mid bias, meanwhile, claims to maintain Class A operation up to 100W, before sliding into Class AB, while the High Bias option is described as '100% Class A'.

THINKING AHEAD

Another front-panel legend is 'Green Bias', the name given for an automated biasing scheme made possible using a compatible Gryphon preamplifier. With pre and power

ABOVE: The display will momentarily show the amplifier status in power On and Check modes. Beneath, illuminated pushbuttons select the three output bias current levels, and mute

units connected via a control cable (a socket labelled 'Green Bias' sits between the Antileon Revelation's AC mains inlets), the power amp's bias setting changes between Mid and High in relation to the 'volume control position' of the preamp

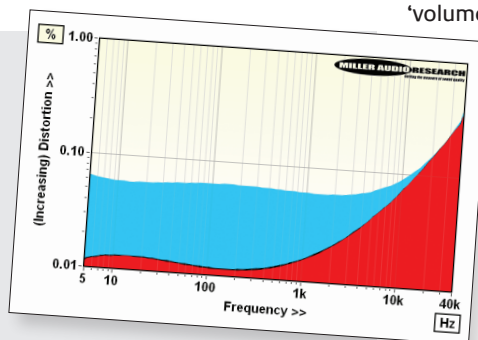
(the exact switching points can be customised in the preamp's menus). But why volume position and not signal level? Explains Gryphon: 'For an amp to be able to increase bias and stabilise thermally to instantaneously track the dynamics of the input, it would have to be able to predict what is going to happen next on the recording'.

Visually, Gryphon's new amplifier manages to appear even more premium than its £40,000 asking price. Look at it from any angle and you'll notice a new element of its design, such as the semi-circular pillar that centres its fascia, or the manufacturer's gryphon mascot, in relief on the top panel. Company founder Flemming E. Rasmussen, who studied painting and graphic arts at Denmark's Aarhus Art Academy, is credited with the Antileon's styling. Although he retired in 2018, its appearance retains elements of the original 1995 design. Purposeful, avant-garde styling is a hallmark of Gryphon's flagship amps and certainly ↻

A BIASED APPROACH

During our time with the Antileon Revelation, the subjective uplift from 'Low' to 'Mid Bias' operation was very obvious, even if 'High Bias' was not always preferred as the richest setting. Gryphon recommends the 'Low' setting only for 'non-critical listening' and this is not an understatement – 'Low Bias' draws 160W from the wall, and while dynamic power output actually increases slightly to 235W/8ohm and 450W/4ohm it collapses into 2 and 1ohm. Also the output impedance increases to 0.11ohm and distortion to 0.06-0.15% [re. 10W; blue trace, inset Graph], the latter now dominated by odd-order harmonics.

The intermediate 'Mid Bias' mode draws a substantial 500W, increasing the output stage's standing current, and reinforcing dynamic output to 240W/2ohm. However there is still little available into 1ohm. Distortion [black trace], noise, response, gain, etc. are all but indistinguishable from 'High Bias' mode [red trace] which draws 720W from the wall at switch on, and maintains sufficient standing current in the output stage that the complementary transistors never switch off. There's a small decrease in output impedance from ~0.044ohm to ~0.040ohm here, while the character of its distortion becomes increasingly second-order. However, the main advantage offered by 'High Bias' is that increase in current to 20A, supporting 780W/2ohm and 300W/1ohm. In practice, the latter will only be tested by the most insensitive speakers possessing the toughest EPDR (loading). For most listeners, the 'Mid Bias' setting will sound perfectly fabulous. PM



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RUNE SKOV

Global Sales Director, Rune Skov, says Gryphon Audio spent a full year developing the Antileon Revelation and assessing prototypes. 'We had a good starting point in the Antileon EVO', he said, 'but the main goal with the Revelation was, naturally, to further improve sonic performance'.

Another point of reference was Gryphon's costlier Apex model, unveiled in 2022. 'The output and driver transistors in the Gryphon Antileon Revelation are the same as used in our Apex flagship power amplifier', explains Skov. 'However, the number of output transistors in the two amplifiers is different [the Apex employs 32 per channel] and while both operate in Class A, the circuits are not identical. That said, the Antileon Revelation does share the Apex's PSU topology'.

Similarly, the amplifier's constrained-layer damped chassis construction is inherited from Gryphon's flagship Commander preamplifier, albeit 'done in another way,' concedes Skov. 'The 23kg transformer enclosure, with its two encapsulated toroidals, together with the associated vibration dampers on the Revelation's base and sides, reduces mechanical resonances and thereby reduces electrical microphony'.

The Commander debuted alongside the Apex to create a flagship pre/power pairing, while the Antileon Revelation launched on its own. Skov, however, says the company's new Helios preamp, unveiled at High End Vienna and offering a DAC module upgrade path, 'would be a perfect match'.



helps its models stand out from much of the competition. As for the name, Antileon translates from Greek as 'lion-like'...

JOY RIDE

Taking over amplification duties in the HFN Listening Room alongside Constellation's Revelation 2 preamplifier [HFN Jan '25] and dCS's Varèse DAC/SACD system [HFN Feb '26], the Antileon Revelation established its driving credentials in unison with Wilson Audio Alexx Vfx floorstanders. Outside of the warmth coming off its heatsinks, it didn't seem to be under any strain as it delivered the room-filling, full-range sonics that its size and specification suggest.

Scale, detail, low-end control, stage width and depth, transparency, balance... the Antileon Revelation ticks all manner of audiophile boxes, and the result is sheer listening joy, from track to track, album to album. Like the brand's earlier Diablo 333 integrated amplifier [HFN Dec '24] there's a liveliness and a vivacity to its sonic performance, although here this is kept better in check, for a sound that's even more grown-up and refined.

The lifelike scale of its performance was apparent with whatever we chose to play. 'Waiting For You', by Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds [Ghosteen; 88.2kHz/24-bit], featured large, natural-sounding piano, and a vocal track of exquisite clarity. With no obvious bass slam in the track, it still sounded almost impossibly deep and full-bodied.

There's also a natural, unforced feel to the Antileon Revelation's soundstaging. Tedeschi Trucks Band's 'Crazy Cryin' [Future Soul, Fantasy; 96kHz/24-bit] isn't a particularly atmospheric recording, but the drums, bass, guitars and vocals were positioned with such authority that the impression of being in the studio with the

ABOVE: The massive chassis sits on four pointed alloy feet. The rear hosts pairs of 15A bladed IEC AC mains inlets, balanced XLR inputs and custom 4mm speaker cable terminals. Note 'Green Bias' port for connection to Gryphon pre

band was hard to shake. Each individual note in the main riff appeared to have a shape of its very own, without anything feeling exaggerated. In short, the track sounded three-dimensional.

FRESH RUMOURS

'Berghain', from Rosalía's *Lux* album [Columbia, 96kHz/24-bit], surrounds the Spanish singer with strings from the London Symphony Orchestra (plus, somewhere amid the urgent chaos, the vocals of Björk). A piece of stops and starts and eclectic mixing choices, it benefited from the amp's superb attack and decay, and marriage of muscle with speed and dynamism.

And, yes, the Antileon Revelation can make overly familiar tracks sound fresh and new. Fleetwood Mac's 'Dreams' [Rumours 2001 remaster, Rhino Records; 96kHz/24-bit] offered everything expected – that chewy bassline, Stevie Nicks' lilting vocal and the punch of the relentless snare. But it also invited me to focus on the three-pronged harmonies and the tiniest spaces between them, plus the acoustic guitar and congas subtly layered into the mix. The amp's lack of any colour was allowing all the natural colour of the performance to shine.

Unlike, say, the global feedback adjustment on CH Precision's M10 power amp [HFN Mar '26], the Antileon Revelation's Mid and High bias modes don't lend themselves to rapid A/B switching, due to the time taken for the biasing to settle. Owners of the amp are most likely to leave

'Every note in the main riff had a shape of its own'



ABOVE: A diecast Gryphon emblem nestles within a thick, black-anodised alloy disc above the transformers in the Antileon Revelation's hefty top-plate

changes to the Green Bias feature in an all-Gryphon pre/power set-up, or stick with one mode depending on the demands of the partnering loudspeakers after a period of evaluation. During our audition period, it was Mid bias that seemed to keep just a little more of a vice-like grip on the low-end output of the Wilson Audio floorstanders.

Speaking of bass frequencies, the Antileon Revelation's control and extension is nothing short of reference-level. Never overblown, loose or ill-defined, it brought a level of quiet authority to any track – Chappell Roan's poppy 'Pink Pony Club' [The Rise And Fall Of A Midwest Princess, Island; 44.1kHz/24-bit] enjoyed deep-reaching bass to convey the thump of the chords and drums in the chorus. But this amp also slams like a T-Rex and sounds detailed no matter how low it goes, as evidenced by the thumping heartbeat-style effects and long, ominous electronic notes in Jóhann Jóhannsson's 'The Beast' from the soundtrack to *Sicario* [Varèse Sarabande 302 067 3698].

LIVE WIRE

Another signature trait of the Antileon Revelation? A mastery of midrange tone and nuance. The Ry Cooder/Ali Farka Touré collaboration *Talking Timbuktu* [World Circuit WCD 040] is a riot of instrumental textures. There are thin and fat sounds, smoothness and grit playing off against each other as the musicians explore African and American traditions. Closing track 'Diaraby' proved the wide-open nature of Gryphon's amplifier, revealing every detail in the various string instruments and vocals.

The Cult's 'Lil' Devil' [Electric; Beggars Banquet 258-223] was

another jaw-on-the-floor listen, the first bars of the drum track causing me to let out an involuntary 'woohoo!' This came after a distorted guitar riff in the left channel of brilliant definition, then

'It slams like a T-Rex no matter how low it goes'

joined by distinct, pure bass. Again, the impression was almost of a live performance as the Antileon Revelation's sound fizzed with energy.

The Berliner Philharmoniker/Simon Rattle recording of Mahler's Symphony No. 2 [Warner Classics; 44.1kHz/24-bit] found it getting into a gentler groove, conveying quieter passages with a soft, deft hand and painting a big, set-back picture of the orchestra. But the thundering percussion of I. Allegro maestoso arrived as a reminder of its latent power and dynamic flair. I don't say this lightly, but the Antileon Revelation is perhaps the best power amplifier I've yet heard. ☺

HI-FI NEWS VERDICT

Our hi-fi world is not short of high-end power amplifiers, but Gryphon's new 'lion-like' Class A model might just be the king of the sub-£50k jungle. Exquisitely styled and meticulously constructed, the Antileon Revelation nails the 'pride of ownership' brief while offering a performance of staggering power, scale and detail. Audition at your own risk, because once you've heard it, you'll have to own it.

Sound Quality: 92%

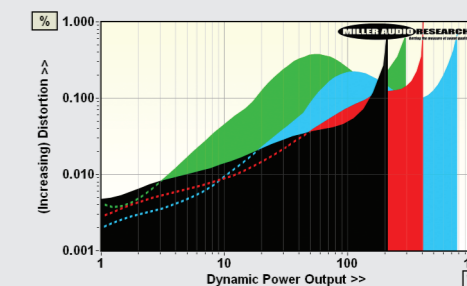


LAB REPORT

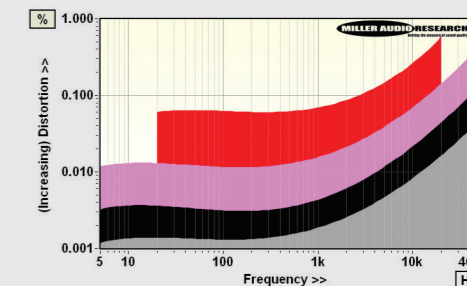
GRYPHON ANTILEON REVELATION

This is the highest output 'pure' Class A amplifier we have tested. In 'High Bias' mode the Antileon Revelation draws 740W from cold to 650W (increasing to 720W at the rated 2x160W/8ohm output) after one hour, by which time the heatsinks and top-plate are at 58°C. Distortion, almost entirely 2nd harmonic, is utterly unchanged at 0.014% (re. 1kHz at 10W/8ohm) through this warm-up period and increases gently with level, from 0.004%/1W to 0.014%/10W, 0.071%/100W and 0.075% at the rated 160W (re. 1kHz/8ohm). Distortion also increases with frequency, above a few kHz, from 0.003-0.045%/1W, 0.011-0.14%/10W and 0.06-0.6%/100W [all re. 20Hz-20kHz/8ohm, see Graph 2]. The Antileon Revelation's output impedance is a flat 0.036-0.042ohm (re. 20Hz-20kHz) and the response flatter still with -1dB points at sub-1Hz out to 96kHz.

But what of power? In 'High Bias' mode the true Class A output looks to be around 110W/8ohm, beyond which there's an uptick in draw from the wall, while the maximum output clearly exceeds Gryphon's specification at 2x210W and 2x390W into 8 and 4ohm loads, respectively. Befitting its Class A operation, there's little extra power under dynamic conditions, with 212W, 410W and 780W into 8, 4 and 2ohm loads, respectively, and limited to 300W/1ohm [see Graph 1, below]. This is clearly a very capable amplifier, but the 'smaller' Class AB Diablo 333 integrated with its 1.75kW/2ohm and 3.05kW/1ohm dynamic output, is more load-tolerant still [HFN Dec '24]. Finally, stereo separation is >80dB (re. 20Hz-20kHz), overall gain is a sensible +31.8dB, requiring just under 1V to achieve the rated output, and the A-wtd S/N ratio is a very generous 92.5dB (re. 0dBW). PM



ABOVE: Dynamic power output versus distortion into 8ohm (black), 4ohm (red), 2ohm (blue) and 1ohm (green) speaker loads. Maximum current is 19.8A



ABOVE: Distortion vs. frequency vs. power output into 8ohm (0.1W, grey; 1W, black; 10W, pink; 100W, red)

HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Power output (<1% THD, 8/4ohm)	210W / 390W
Dynamic power (<1% THD, 8/4/2/1ohm)	212W / 410W / 780W / 300W
Output imp. (20Hz-20kHz/100kHz)	0.036-0.042ohm / 0.053ohm
Freq. resp. (20Hz-20kHz/100kHz)	+0.00dB to -0.13dB/-1.1dB
Input sensitivity (for 0dBW/160W)	74mV / 940mV
A-wtd S/N ratio (re. 0dBW/160W)	92.5dB / 114.5dB
Distortion (20Hz-20kHz, 1W/10W)	0.003-0.045% / 0.011-0.14%
Power consumption (Idle/Rated o/p)	660W / 720W (1W standby)
Dimensions (WHD) / Weight	570x260x600mm / 90kg