



Accuphase E-370

There is something reassuringly familiar about Accuphase components. Part of the reason is a design approach that successfully mixes retro-inspired nostalgia with modern-day functionality. But there's also the tactile appeal of a device that looks and feels solid enough to last a lifetime.

The E-370 integrated amplifier is no exception. Its styling is steeped in 1970s nostalgia, with the by now familiar champagne-hued faceplate common to all Accuphase components, and a large display dominated by twin VU meters, framing a red LED numeric display.

Rotary controllers on either side look after volume and source selection, while the remaining facilities consist of buttons for power on/off, loudness and attenuation. There's also a headphone jack.

However, there's more: a flip-down cover reveals a much more comprehensive array of switchgear, including tone and balance controls, speaker selection, stereo/mono and phase buttons, and function buttons governing display options, the tape loop, and functions specific to the option boards.

Those option boards are slide-in, PC-style hardware cards that slip into a pair of slots on the rear panel. Accuphase offers two variations – the AD-30 phono stage, and the DAC-40 digital-to-analogue converter board. More about these later.

The option slots apart, the rear panel offers five line-level RCA input sets, as well as two balanced XLR input sets. There's also a tape loop, while a stereo pre-output set allows the E-370 to feed a separate power amp – useful for bi-amping, or where more power is needed.

A stereo power input set allows the E-370 to be used as a power amp only, and used in conjunction with a separate pre-amp – which frankly seems a bit of a waste, given the versatility and capability of the E-370's own pre-amp stage.

Dual sets of robust speaker binding posts will accept spades, bare wire and banana plugs, and means that two pairs of loudspeakers can be connected. These can be operated simultaneously, or individually, or switched off completely, for instance when headphones are being used. An IEC kettle-type power socket completes the rear panel picture.

The innards of the E-370 are further

proof of the painstaking attention to detail and dedication to quality that permeate all the brand's products. The volume control is a prime example.

Level adjustment is achieved via what Accuphase calls an analogue variable gain amplifier, which uses 16 different V-I converter op amps to achieve more than 65 000 volume steps, without the need for variable resistors in the signal path.

Accuphase claims this ensures absolute signal integrity with no impedance changes, regardless of the playback volume selected, thus benefiting signal-to-noise ratio and outright sonic quality.

The circuit topology of the E-370 completely separates the power amp and pre-amp stages, allowing each section to be accessed and operated separately, if required, using the pre-output and power input sets.

The left and right power amplifier channels are symmetrically configured, with the power amplifier stage and the push-pull output stage mounted on heatsinks on either side of the E-370's enclosure. A large power transformer and generous filtering capacitors are centrally mounted between the two.



The Accuphase brought the musical action right into the room and accurately, believably rendered the essence and the character of the piano and the vocals.

The option boards, both of which were fitted to the E-370, are worth a closer look. The AD-30 is a phono stage offering both moving magnet and moving coil phono cartridge compatibility. In MC mode, on-board dip switches allow selectable input impedances of 30, 100 and 300 ohms, while the gain is a generous 66 dB. For MM operation, input impedance is 47 kOhm, while the gain is 40 dB.

The DAC-40 board adds digital-to-analogue conversion capability to the E-370. It employs a pair of AD1955 DAC chips, and offers D/A conversion up to 192 kHz/24-bit resolution in the case of the coaxial RCA input, and the asynchronous USB input, but limited to 96 kHz/24-bit as far as the Toslink optical input is concerned.

Usefully, the E-370 makes provision for the switchgear relevant to the option boards under that hinged front cover. Thus, you'll find a MM/MC selector button, as well as a selector to allow switching between the DAC-40's three digital inputs.

The Accuphase was hooked up to a variety of loudspeakers during its tenure at *AV Magazine*, but most of the listening was conducted using our KEF R500 floor-standers, and a pair of Sonus faber Principia 5s on review at the time.

Regardless of material, the E-370 approached its musical wares with confidence and authority. It managed to grasp the essence of the music and presented the sonic results with a sense of clean, unfettered elegance.

The amp didn't impose an 'own' signature on the music – instead, it allowed the character of the original recording to shine through without any interference or modification. That was as true of analogue as it was of digital signals, with the DAC-40 digital option board doing an admirable job of translating high-res digital files into sonically satisfying music.

The DAC's sonic approach found a balance of clarity and musicality that seemed to make the most of the material. It accurately reflected the fundamentals of the music, yet steered clear of becoming too analytical, and always allowed the emotive essence of a performance

to shine through.

The AD-30 phono stage demonstrated similar sonic traits, doing well to demonstrate an impressively low noise floor that allowed the vivid, bold approach of the Ortofon 2M Red MM cartridge on our Rega Planar 3 turntable to come to the fore with believable urge. It didn't have the air nor the outright refinement of our Ayre P-5x phono stage, but displayed a resolute musicality that made for engaging listening.

On 'Ascension Day', off Elvis Costello and the late Alain Touissant's collaborative *The River In Reverse*, the intimacy of Costello's vocals and Touissant's deft, virtuoso piano were beautifully, even soulfully presented.

Costello's vocals dominate centre stage, but they're wrapped in Touissant's delicate piano – if anything, the vocals serve to

VITAL STATS

Power output	2x 100 watts continuous (8 ohms, 20 Hz - 20 kHz)
Frequency response	20 Hz - 20 kHz (+0, -0,5 dB)
Signal-to-noise ratio	97 dB (balanced input)
Analogue inputs5x stereo single-ended RCA, 2x stereo balanced XLR, power in
Outputs.....	Tape loop, pre-out
Option boards fitted.....	DAC-40 (coaxial RCA, Toslink optical, asynchronous USB) AD-30 (MM/MC phono stage)
Dimensions (WxHxD)	465 x 171 x 422 mm
Weight.....	22,7 kg

Price

E-370	R76 500
AD-30	R9 800
DAC-40	R13 500

Verdict

Succinct and authoritative yet musical approach that places the emphasis on clarity and authenticity. Option boards add valuable versatility. Superior build quality.

Supplied by

Lowveld Audio
013-758-1836

e-Mail

info@lowveldaudio.co.za

Website

www.lowveldaudio.co.za

OUR RATING: 88 / 100





Software

Elvis Costello/Allen Toussaint – *The River In Reverse* (44,1/16 WAV)
 Dvorak – *Violin Concerto In A Minor Op53 Anne-Sophie Mutter/ Manfred Honeck/Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra* (DG 44,1/16 WAV)
 Arne Domnerus – *Jazz At The Pawnshop 2 (Proprius 44,1/16 WAV)*
 Claire Martin – *Time And Place* (Linn 192/24 FLAC)
 Maeve O'Boyle – *All My Sins* (Linn 192/24)
 The Doobie Brothers – *Southbound* (44,1/16 FLAC)
 Robert Plant/Allison Krauss – *Raising Sand* (Rounder LP)

Associated Equipment

Olive One network player
 Synology e216 NAS
 Marantz SA-KI Pearl Lite CD/SACD deck
 Rega Planar 3/Moth RB250/Ortofon 2M Red turntable
 Ayre P-5x phono stage
 KEF R500 speakers
 Sonus faber Principia 5 speakers
 B&W PM1 monitors

highlight the glorious piano. The Accuphase brought the musical action right into the room and accurately, believably rendered the essence and the character of the piano and the vocals.

The results were almost startlingly realistic. On 'International Echo', the rambunctious mix of brass, honky-tonk piano and splashy percussion all conspire to create a joyous, foot-tapping listening experience.

The sound was tonally clean and accessible, but never astringent. In fact, neutral is perhaps a better description, but without emasculating the music: the E-370 demonstrated plenty of low-frequency weight, combined with real pace and momentum.

Turning to the scale and grandeur of Dvorak's *Violin Concerto in A Minor*, violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter's typically passionate and technically adroit performance was treated with the same level of respect and realism.

Again, the Accuphase never intruded on

the music, instead affording it full, free passage. Mutter's violin had real body and timbre, sounding regal and composed while soaring freely above the well-mannered yet muscular orchestra.

Indeed the sound was allowed to ebb and flow unfettered across, over and into a generously dimensioned, airy sound-stage. The amp's authority was never stretched, not even at higher listening levels, and while it took full control of the music, it also allowed the dynamics, the momentum and the sheer urge of the music to be fully expressed.

On *Jazz At The Pawnshop 2* the Accuphase breathed new life in a set that has been played to death by an entire generation of hi-fi salesmen. 'Over The Rainbow' sounded fresh and energetic, with the sax all sassy and a-shimmer, holding court over a sterner, more composed piano, while the high-tempo percussion injected a sense of brisk intensity.

The music sounded foot-tappingly real, thanks in part to a very believably rendered, three-dimensional image that sounded open and airy, but never lost sight of the venue's close-quarters ambience.

It allowed each instrument to come to the fore with verve and credibility.

Claire Martin's rendition of the David Bowie classic 'The Man Who Sold The World' (off her *Time And Place* set) becomes a tango-infused romp, filled with the resonant splendour of a posse of cellos and vibrant percussion, all presided over by a rampant Martin.

Despite the best efforts of the strings to dominate proceedings, it's Martin who remains in control, and who adds an extra edge of splendour and occasion to the performance. The Accuphase rendered both the broad strokes and finest nuances of the music, inviting insight and involvement.

Scottish singer Maeve O'Boyle's 'Old Greenwich Time' sounded fresh and approachable, with O'Boyle's emotive vocals captured with close precision and sympathy. The recording is lucid and tonally wideband, giving plenty of space to the golden sheafs of electric and acoustic guitar, the muscular bass, and the surprising entry of smooth, sunny strings.

The Accuphase's talent for paying close attention to the full spectrum of the music, from delicate details to the bolder,

brighter strokes, yet without losing sight of the intent and thrust of the music, was particularly well demonstrated here.

Finally, the moody, melancholy rendition of 'Summertime' by Annie Lennox off *Nostalgia* provided compelling, riveting listening. The vocals and piano were almost eerily presented in an initially empty acoustic space that was slowly, subtly filled with strings and choral voices.

Lennox and her piano always remain at centre stage, with the string section and the chorus waxing and waning – here the accuracy, the fine detail and the dynamic capabilities of the amp were believably showcased to riveting effect.

The Accuphase E-370 is both a fine expression of precise, meaningful audio technology and the art of hi-fi. It links accuracy and an ability to peel back the layers of a recording to a real grasp of the music's essence and emotion.

Add an extensive array of facilities, and the option to add a phono stage and a DAC that easily warrant their asking prices in performance terms, and the E-370 makes a very strong case for a single-box, integrated amplifier solution that excels on all fronts.

Deon Schoeman

