



# Yamaha A-S1100

**Y**amaha has closer links to music than most hi-fi brands: the company not only produces an extensive range of consumer electronics, including home theatre, stereo and lifestyle-related audio components, but also a comprehensive array of musical instruments, including full-sized concert grand pianos.

Considering that the art of hi-fi is supposed to be a quest for musical realism, that link between electronics and musical instruments should be a beneficial one – and the execution and performance of the Yamaha A-S1100, seems to vindicate just that.

The integrated amplifier is the ‘smaller’ sibling of the hugely impressive A-S2100 amp we reviewed some months back, and so it comes as no surprise that this more modest expression of the Yamaha amplifier art shares many of the sonic traits of its larger, more muscular stablemate.

It certainly offers the same, admirable levels of build quality. The A-S1100 is a

fairly hefty piece of kit, featuring an all-metal enclosure, thick alloy faceplate, and chunky, retro-inspired switchgear.

Given the minimalist approach of many so-called audiophile amps, it’s refreshing and just a little reassuring that the Yamaha offers a full house of features, starting with those sexy, analogue VU meters, but also including bass, treble and balance settings.

However, for those with a more purist mindset, the good news is that the tone controls are completely bypassed when set to the zero/flat position. Two large rotary controllers look after source selection and volume control.

The rear panel continues the quality theme with two sets of substantial five-way binding posts, allowing connection of two pairs of speakers if required. These can be switched on and off individually.

The input offering includes an MM/MC phono stage – a welcome addition, given the return to popularity of vinyl records and turntables. Also on offer is a pre-

output set, allowing the use of a separate power amplifier for upgrade or bi-amping purposes. There is also main input set, for cases where the A-S1100’s amplifier stage needs to be linked to a separate pre-amp.

The Yamaha was used in conjunction with our regular KEF R500 reference loudspeakers, as well as with a pair of KEF LS50s, with a Marantz SA-CD KI Pearl Lite providing the source signal.

The amplifier adopts a clean, clear sonic approach that prioritises detail, air and dimension. As such, it’s a revealing performer that’s particularly adept at making the most of fine details. However, that inherent lucidity was never allowed to compromise the amplifier’s tonal composure: the upper frequencies remained clear and neutral, without becoming bright or brittle.

The tonal presentation was progressive and linear, with those crystalline tops linked to a smooth, full midrange and a powerful, authoritative bottom end. The Yamaha exuded a real sense of urge and



authority, endowing low frequencies with impact and impetus, while always remaining in undisputed control.

This was particular prevalent when listening to large-scale works: Beethoven's *Symphony No. 7* (RCA SACD), performed by the NDR Symphony Orchestra under Günter Wand, sounded majestic, with the Yamaha easily reproducing the full tonal range, the thrust and the scale of the music.

It created a soundstage generous enough to do the size and scope of the orchestra full justice, while also paying close attention to the finer details and tonal shades. The result was a full-dimensional, immersive listening experience laced with a strong sense of realism.

The A-S1100 was equally adept at expressing the inherent charm of Jennifer Warnes' lucidly recorded *Famous Blue Raincoat* (96/24 FLAC). Its treatment of Warnes' vocals was smooth and revealing, faithfully expressing the glow and timbre of her voice, while also doing full justice to the music's sweeping sonic vistas.

The music here was delivered with a pervasive sense of poise and presence, confirming that the Yamaha was always in control, but never to the detriment of the music's flow and rhythm.

When I listened to the same recording,

but this time on vinyl using the Rega Planar 3/Moth RB250/Ortofon 2M Red turntable in our studio, the sound was fuller and richer, with a slightly softer edge to the lower registers, but an even smoother, airier treatment of the trebles.

To the credit of the Yamaha's phono stage, the backdrop was absolutely silent, allowing impressive retrieval of detail. Staging remained open and accessible, with accurate rendition of scale and dimension.

Calexico's *Spiritoso* is a live set, with the band joined by a full orchestra, which adds a broader sonic scope to the band's eclectic, multi-layered sound. The A-S1100 revelled in the challenge of expressing both the expansive scale and the intricacy of the music, creating a sound that was vibrant and exciting in the process.

This Yamaha has the power, the precision and the pace to make music – any music – come alive. Its inherent lucidity may be considered too neutral by some, and will

also reveal flaws in poorer recordings more readily, but the ability to express the full impact and emotive appeal of the music, and to present it with composure and confidence, makes the A-S1100 an impressive and satisfying performer.

Deon Schoeman

VITAL STATS

- Power output ..... 2x 90 watts (8 ohms, 20 Hz – 20 kHz)  
2x 150 watts (4 ohms, 20 Hz – 20 kHz)
- Frequency response .... 5 Hz – 100 kHz (CD, +0, -3 dB)
- Signal-to-noise ratio ..... 100 dB (CD, 200mV, input shorted)
- Inputs ..... 4x stereo RCA line inputs, 1x MM/MC phono stage, 1x stereo main input set
- Outputs ..... 1x stereo pre-output set, 1x stereo line out, 2x binding post sets
- Dimensions (WxDxH) ..... 435 x 463 x 157 mm
- Weight ..... 23,3 kg

Verdict

A regal, assured delivery from this beautifully crafted amplifier. Tonal clarity and expressive staging ensure an engrossing listening experience.

Price ..... R16 660

Supplied by ..... Balanced Audio  
011-259-7800

e-Mail ..... chantel@baudio.co.za

Website ..... www.balancedaudio.co.za

OUR RATING: 86/100

