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hi-fi/stereo

BUYERS' GUIDE

JULY-AUGUST 1979



PIONEER SA-8800 INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER

A feature-laden non-switching amplifier rated at 80 watts per channel. Features include phono cartridge resistive loading selection, phono cartridge capacitive loading selection, phono input radio frequency interference filter, fluorescent output display—and that's just naming a few. Our lab found that it has exceptionally low distortion and exceptionally fine sound. Total control of cartridge loading allows users to fine-tune the performance of virtually any phono pickup cartridge—getting just a little extra out of whatever pickup you choose to use. \$550 in wood cabinet.

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DESCRIPTION: An integrated stereo amplifier, which is FTC-rated at 80 watts RMS per channel into 8 ohms, 10 to 20,000Hz, at a distortion of 0.005% THD. Features include: switch-selected cartridge resistive loading of 100, 10k, 25k, 50k and 100k ohms and capacitive loading of 100, 200, 300, 400 and 500pF; a phono input radio frequency interference filter; 12-step left and right output power fluorescent light-bar displays calibrated from 0.001 to 80 watts into 8 ohms; a subsonic filter; automatic dubbing to and from either of two tape recorders; tone control defeat; break-in connections for accessory equipment (such as graphic equalizer); and an output hold-off that prevents power supply turn-on transients from being fed to the speakers.

There are inputs for two magnetic phono, aux, tuner, and two tape. Outputs for two speaker systems, two tape, and phones. The preamplifier outputs and main amplifier inputs are available on the rear apron.

Controls are provided for volume, balance, ganged bass, ganged treble, stereo/mono modes, resistive cartridge loading, and capacitive cartridge loading. There are switches for power, tone control defeat, subsonic filter, loudness compensation, high filter, tape-duplicate selector, and tape monitor selector. The phono input RF filter in-out switch is on the rear apron.

Two switched and two unswitched AC outlets are provided.

Overall dimensions are 17-11/16 in. wide x 6-1/8 in. high x 16-3/4 in. deep. Weight is 34.4 lbs.

PERFORMANCE—AMPLIFIER: The power output at the clipping level with both channels driven 20 to 20,000Hz into 8 ohms measured 84 watts RMS. The frequency response at

84 watts/8 ohms measured +0/-0.2dB from 20 to 20,000Hz at a distortion no higher than 0.007% THD at any frequency.

The tone control range measured +11/-13dB at 50Hz; +9.5/-11dB at 10,000Hz.

The subsonic filter resulted in an attenuation of 2.2dB at 20Hz.

The phono input RF filter appeared to have no effect on sound quality. Its effectiveness in suppressing radio frequency interference remains an unknown factor because the amplifier was completely immune to interference when placed adjacent to both high power shortwave transmitters and CB transceivers. Whatever, the filter causes no degradation to the sound quality when used with standard, commonly-used pickups.

PERFORMANCE—OUTPUT POWER INDICATORS: Each sector has a turn-on factor of about 1.5 to 2.2, which is also slightly frequency dependent at the extremes of 20 and 20,000 Hz. The power readings are therefore approximate: for example, at 1000Hz the 10-watt sector will illuminate over the range of 9 to 20 watts. The "action" is a peak-signal rise with a delayed decay, producing the visual effect of a flowing light-bar.

PERFORMANCE—CARTRIDGE LOADING: The listening panel reported that the cartridge loading is so extensive it is possible to fine-tune a little bit extra in the way of sound quality out of any high performance pickup. A few of the settings, however, degraded overall sound quality, but the selection is so broad you can find the optimum capacity/resistance for virtually any commonly-used pickup.

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