



“... a stone-cold bargain.”

THE PERFECT
VISION

BY SHANE BUETTNER

ISSUE 42

To complement the AVM 20, Anthem designed the PVA 7, which (as its name suggests) is a seven channel amplifier rated at 105Wpc, all channels driven into 8 ohms. At the price, on a per-channel basis, this is one of the most affordable multichannel amplifiers available.

Anthem claims that having its own design and manufacturing facilities allows it to offer higher quality products at lower prices, as with the AVM 20 and its Paradigm loudspeaker series.

OUTSIDE

The PVA 7 is as unassuming a box as one could imagine—with a silver faceplate (also available in black), a single

power button, and a single LED (which indicates when the amplifier is on).

The back panel has seven single-ended inputs, with lines directing the user/installer to the correct speaker-output terminal. The five-way binding posts are well made and offer some protection from prying fingers, while also accommodating large spade lugs with ease.

At the upper left corner of the back panel are a set of trigger-signal inputs and outputs that allow a controller (such as the AVM 20) to power the amplifier on and off. Below the trigger terminals is a three-way switch that configures the amplifier to “trigger” on via a controller, as explained, or to

power up manually, or to turn on when it senses an input signal.

INSIDE

Inside the Anthem PVA 7 are three stereo-channel modules, and one mono module for center-channel duty. Each module has its own heatsink and all share a single power supply with an 800VA toroidal transformer and filter caps that total 100,000 microfarads of storage capacity. The PVA 7 uses a total of 28 high-current bipolar output devices. Anthem’s literature emphasizes that the PVA 7 employs a sophisticated system that monitors the temperature, current, and voltage of the output devices without being in the actual signal path.

“What do you say about a product that exceeds all expectations for its price category? ... I’ve not heard an amplifier that’s significantly better at anywhere near its price.”

SOUND AND PERFORMANCE

The PVA 7 is remarkably refined, with a surprising amount of resolution and depth. It definitely competes with more expensive products on those fronts. In addition to listening to it with the AVM 20, I also used it as a stereo amplifier with the BAT VK-50SE preamplifier with surprisingly good results. The midrange has natural clarity, and strong focus and depth in the center of the soundstage. It didn’t focus far out to the sides of the soundstage like my Theta Dreadnaught, and it didn’t have the spaciousness at the top or the weight at the bottom end that my reference consistently shows, but it was more than respectable in these regards, and always a pleasure to listen to.

“The PVA 7 is remarkably refined, with a surprising amount of resolution and depth. It definitely competes with more expensive products ... The mid-range has natural clarity, and strong focus and depth in the center of the soundstage. ... always a pleasure to listen to.”

On the surround-sound front, the PVA 7 was also impressive. It showed dimensionality and spaciousness with the best soundtrack material, with reasonably sharp focus along the sidewalls and between speaker positions. This amp was particularly good with music DVDs encoded in surround sound like Columbia’s *The Best of Sessions at West 54th*, sounding natural and detailed, with a degree of spatiality that effectively enhanced the presentation. I’ve not heard an amplifier that’s significantly better at anywhere near its price. While much of the detail during loud and aggressive soundtrack sequences is clearly rendered, the PVA 7 doesn’t burn a hole through your head, as certain other amplifiers do.

“On the surround-sound front, the PVA 7 was also impressive. It showed dimensionality and spaciousness with the best soundtrack material ... This amp was particularly good with music DVDs encoded in surround sound ... sounding natural and detailed, with a degree of spatiality that effectively enhanced the presentation.”

The PVA 7 was not as dynamic and muscular as some multi-channel amps I’ve heard, such as ATI’s 150S and B&K’s 725O.

Those amplifiers have more powerful bass, can reproduce greater dynamic contrast, and sound more powerful, with more visceral impact at high volume levels. But neither of those amplifiers sounds as musically right, timbrally accurate, and un-mechanical to me as the PVA 7.

Music is a bigger part of my life than it is for many home-theater enthusiasts, and the tradeoffs presented by the PVA 7 are in line with my preferences.

“... musically right ... timbrally accurate ... The Anthem PVA 7 offers a lot for the price. ... It’s well built ... and its performance is exceptional ... an easy amplifier to recommend, and a stone-cold bargain.”

THE BOTTOM LINE

What do you say about a product that exceeds all expectations for its price category? The Anthem PVA 7 offers a lot for the price. It’s well-built and decent-looking, and its performance is exceptional in its price range. The Anthem PVA 7 is an easy amplifier to recommend, and a stone-cold bargain.

