



TLP 1



PVA 2

“The Anthem duo excelled”



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UNDISPUTED QUALITY/PRICE RATIO!

For more than a decade, the Ontario company Sonic Frontiers International/Anthem has achieved global recognition in all fields of music reproduction. They are used, for instance, by leading companies and prestigious recording studios, the French radio station—Europe 1, and on board NASA Space Shuttles.

THE TLP 1

The TLP 1's facade is trimmed with six millimetre-thick brushed silver or black aluminium which gives it a look of elegance and seriousness. The chassis is made of a sheet of folded steel of substantial gauge, all beautifully finished in black. The Instruction Manual is simple and concise.

The layout of the controls on the face is convenient and ergonomic. A total of six

inputs may be selected, including the tuner which features preset (memory) buttons, in addition to the usual buttons for scanning and for selection of reception type – stereo, high blend or mono. It also features a headphone outlet. The adjustable front-panel LCD display allows clear and precise reading at normal distances.

Anthem incorporates tone controls in the TLP 1, a rare feature in hi-fi components. But not to worry, Anthem also included a Bypass button. It is also amazing to find a loudness (tone contouring) button on such a system. However, its effect falls off gradually to minus 20 decibels. The volume potentiometer is also very well designed. Thanks to a digitally controlled CMOS stepped attenuator, this completely analog circuit relies on the voltage variation principle used in operational amplifiers. Practically speaking, this principle is very closely related to resistance potentiome-

ters, but does not cost as much. In addition to its normal function, it allows for the selection of distinct volume levels for different sources.

In addition to the usual outputs to the amplifier, Anthem innovates with a double mono output for subwoofers. The high frequency fixed cut-off is set at 80 Hertz at 24 decibels per octave. The Anthem preamplifier likewise is equipped with a pair of stereo outputs which shave 12 decibels per octave off frequencies lower than 80 Hertz, thus limiting their negative effect on your speakers. In this way, you can supplement the power of your smaller-size loudspeakers simply by using a subwoofer.

The ergonomically designed universal remote allows for control of up to three components of various makes. Unfortunately, it is not back-lit, which makes reading it in the dark somewhat problematic.

A detachable power cord (Philips standard) is available, as well as auto-illumination of Anthem components using a 12 volt relay.

“... the smoothness of the Anthem components will seduce you ... dialogue breathes freely and never sounds boxed in ... strikingly realistic ... the duo never once tripped up, even at high volumes.”

THE PVA 2

Similar in internal layout to the TLP 1 preamplifier/tuner, the PVA 2 calls upon a modular design principle which reduces audio signal length by eliminating superfluous parts in the signal path. The circuit board is manufactured in accordance with FR-4 military specifications and uses only components selected for their sound quality. Multiple bipolar output transistors supply high-current power. Reserve power is supplied through a storage capacity of 40,000 micro farads and a 500-volt/ampere toroidal transformer.

The PVA 2's rear panel is equipped with a pair of adequately made input connectors. Loudspeaker connections are the five-way type and accommodate use of large speaker cable connectors. An input/output set-up allowing turn-on by 12 volt remote control relays is included. Finally, a detachable AC power cord is also included.

These two components really give the impression that they are made of one solid piece. This bodes well for long-term reliability.

“Coherence, clarity, naturalness – these are the great strengths of these Anthem components.”

PERFORMANCE

I received this beautiful couple of musicians in early spring. Considering the feisty spring which refused to warm us with its sudden bursts of winter, I had all the time in the world to enjoy the tender comforts of my home and, of course, these two components. By the time you read these lines, summer should already be at our door ...

So I got down to work ... What work! It is the kind of toil of which the whole world dreams, like that of a professional hockey player! I left these audio components on for a few days to allow for break-in, with the radio serving as a signal source. I have to admit that I did not test the AM band at all. Within the limits imposed by local broadcasting, the FM band performed marvellously. Stereo separation is very good and background noise is almost nonexistent. Certain stations, one of which is Radio-Canada, deserve a medal for their signal transmission quality. Radio-Canada at 100.7 occasionally airs both live and pre-recorded recitals on *Radio Concert*. For instance, I listened to the Ensemble Norteño perform music by Astor Piazzolla in a concert recorded at the National Library of Canada in Ottawa. It was fabulous! With these audio compo-

nents, you'll be able to discover what FM sound quality really means. The TLP 1 and PVA 2 allow the music to flow without changing it a bit. All you'll hear is what the intrinsic limits of FM technology allow.

“The brass section literally came to life in my living room. The duo produces a precise instrumental separation, and harmonic richness has an amazing range.”

I was looking through my collection to select some golden oldies. Let's begin with the very wicked *1812 Overture* by Tchaikovsky played by the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Erich Kunzel. All audiophiles probably remember that the echoing cannon shots are recorded 30 decibels above the average sound pickup level. No amplifier or pair of loudspeakers are immune to it. Allow me to express my astonishment. Despite the fact that the dynamic range was slightly truncated and considering the limitations that a recording of this kind imposed on my loudspeakers and on the PVA 2, I was still blown away. The amplifier remained fully in control, its power reserve being much greater than what was needed. The power supply showed remarkable stability. Further revisiting of this benchmark test already promises lots of wonderful surprises!

However, what is most surprising, in view of the very reasonable price range of these two audio components, is the total absence of random noise and the noiseless operation of the Anthem pair. This is probably due to the circuit design of the PVA 2 and TLP 1 which is based on the principle that shorter is better.

“Never did I feel any auditory fatigue or any aggressiveness that might have decreased my listening pleasure.”

The “Marche à l'échafaud” section of Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique* was simply outstanding. The élan of the tenor drum literally burst out. The Anthem duo excelled by virtue of its high musicality and the 3-D stereo image it produced. They distinguish themselves as well by their remarkable depth. The high—medium range predominates slightly, which gives one the impression of being closer to the stage. This did not, by any means, appear to me to be a fault! The brass section literally came to life in my living room. The duo produces a precise instrumental separation, and harmonic richness has an amazing range.

The Anthem TLP 1 and PVA 2 display a warm and full sound quality which certain listeners might perceive as a form of coloration. Never did I feel any auditory fatigue or any aggressiveness that might have decreased my listening pleasure. Sonic Frontiers has favoured tubes for a long time and its offspring certainly show their lineage.

Without a shadow of a doubt, the smoothness of the Anthem components will seduce you. Still, they are capable of becoming just as incisive when dealing with poor recordings. In home theatre mode, dialogue breathes freely and never sounds boxed in.

The differences in amplitude are strikingly realistic, and the duo never once tripped up, even at high volumes.

I then put on one of my favourite CDs, *The Great American Songbook* by Rod Stewart. The voice of this pop singer shows a hitherto unknown side—that of a true American-style crooner. On this CD, he revisits in his own way, several titles, including “It Had To Be You.” The recording studio deliberately put his warm and rather rough voice in the forefront. This was a true delicacy and I thoroughly enjoyed every single title, although with the Anthem set, Stewart seemed to me to be even closer than usual.

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Coherence, clarity, naturalness—these are the great strengths of these Anthem components. The company sets itself apart from the competition through the quality of its manufacturing and the user-friendly nature of its components. The PVA 2 and TLP 1 are certainly built to last but they come with a 5-year warranty, just in case. I strongly suggest that you not just believe what I say because I say so, but that you go and experience them for yourself at your local retailer.