



# Super stack

This four-box pre/power stack is a bank account buster that shares the styling of the Nu-Vista 800 integrated. Fantasy buy!

**E**ver get the feeling we've been here before? Well, the arrival of Musical Fidelity's latest amplifier system brings a new twist to the whole *déjà vu* thing as the Nu-Vista naming and macho aesthetics are familiar from the historically hefty Nu-Vista 800 integrated amplifier. That classic tube-equipped integrated, also rated at 300W/8ohm, provided the inspiration for both the industrial and technical design of the PRE and PAS here, the hybrid nuvistor/transistor concept now evolved into a pre/power setup, complete with separate PSUs for each. So one box is now four..

Thus we have an all-analogue fully balanced preamp the Nu-Vista PRE, selling for £20,500 complete with its partnering PRE PSU power supply to which it connects using a trio of umbilical cables. The matching 300W stereo power amp, the £22,000 Nu-Vista PAS, is serviced by the PAS

## The sympathetic handling of the instrumental tone is highly impressive

PSU via no fewer than five umbilicals. All four units share the same massive alloy casework, with different fascia and top sections machined away to accommodate grilles and displays, etc. as required. The PAS has fluted sidecheeks too in order to improve the heatsinking of its transistor power amp.

The PRE and PRE PSU together weigh in at 47kg while the PAS and PAS PSU add up to 67kg, thanks in no small part to the latter's much heavier toroidal transformers. Want more power? The Nu-Vista series will soon be joined by a monoblock power amp, the PAM, a fully balanced, bridged design rated at 600W/8ohm and pitched at £20,500 apiece. It weighs the same as the PAS and comes in the same metalwork as the units here, all of which are available in a silver or black finish.

While these new components aren't outrageous in terms of size and price in

the context of the wider high-end market, they certainly see the brand, now under the wing of Austrian-based Audio Tuning, setting itself more ambitious targets.

With their art deco-inspired casework and 'Call them stunning or bizarre, they'll probably leave you speechless' advertising line, those amps are certainly conversation pieces, and sound every bit as stunning.

A sense of scale is required to appreciate the size of the Nu-Vista PRE's two giant rotaries, one for volume – the preamp has both fixed and variable outputs on RCAs and XLRs – the other to select between its 12 sets of line inputs, again on six pairs of RCAs and six XLRs. There's no phono stage or module bay for an aftermarket DAC option because these facilities are all coming down the line as matching Nu-Vista separates.

Under the milled alloy top plate are two pairs of 6S51N nuvistors per channel, forming a fully balanced input circuit that drives a solid-state Class A output (with +6dB gain option). The latter comprises two pairs of power transistors per channel that would not look out of place in a circa-50W integrated amplifier. Here they are configured for a low impedance, high headroom source to drive the partnering PAS with ease. The power amp is also a hybrid design, employing a similar, fully balanced nuvistor 'op-amp' input/driver stage, this time ahead of a Sanken transistor-based power amp. Musical Fidelity has great experience with this high power, high current output stage configuration.

So, how to position your Nu-Vistas? Out of the box, the amps are provided with 1m PSU umbilicals but 3m sets, for a wider component spacing, are available at £290 for the PRE/PSU and £500 for the PAS/PSU. Spikes, with cups provided to protect the supporting surface, are included for use in place of the felt pads that are otherwise affixed under each chassis' four alloy feet.

Firing up both PRE and PAS is a two-stage process, using first the power switch on each PSU and then the power/standby button on the PRE and

### DETAILS

**PRODUCT**  
Musical Fidelity  
Nu-Vista PRE,  
PAS & PSUs

**ORIGIN**  
UK

**TYPE**  
Pre/power stack

**WEIGHT**  
Nu-Vista PRE: 22kg  
PRE PSU: 25kg  
Nu-Vista PAS: 27kg  
PAS PSU: 40kg

**DIMENSIONS**  
(WxHxD)  
Nu-Vista PRE:  
483 x 188 x 506mm  
Nu-Vista PRE PSU:  
483 x 188 x 478mm  
Nu-Vista PAS:  
483 x 188 x 494mm  
Nu-Vista PAS PSU:  
483 x 188 x 478mm

### FEATURES

- PRE inputs: 6x RCA; 6x XLR
- PRE outputs: 1x RCA (fixed); 1x XLR (fixed); 1x RCA (variable); 1x XLR (variable)
- PAS inputs: 2x RCA; 2x XLR
- PAS outputs (loophrough): 1x RCA; 1x XLR

**DISTRIBUTOR**  
Henley Audio Ltd.

**WEBSITE**  
musicalfidelity.com  
henleyaudio.co.uk

PAS' fascia (or via remote). Do that and the display will light up, as will the LEDs illuminating the nuvistors, glowing red for about 12 seconds while the output is muted, then orange (still warming up, but unmuted) and, after about 20 minutes, blue indicating optimum performance.

A button on the fascia and remote allows the PRE/PAS displays to be switched between black or white, and between an information readout or level meters. The display brightness can be adjusted by a sequence of button presses on both the PRE and PAS.

Around the back, both PRE and PAS 'communicate' with their respective PSUs via a four-pin XLR control cable while two five-pin XLRs carry power for the nuvistor input stages. The PAS has additional Neutrik-terminated umbilicals for its power amp stage. Given that you'll also have audio cabling between the PRE and PAS themselves, and to the inputs and speaker terminals, and perhaps also to those optional 12V trigger links, you'll have a nest of wiring back there!

Incidentally, twin speaker cable binding posts are provided for each channel, facilitating bi-wiring, but though chunky they are better suited to 4mm than spade terminations.

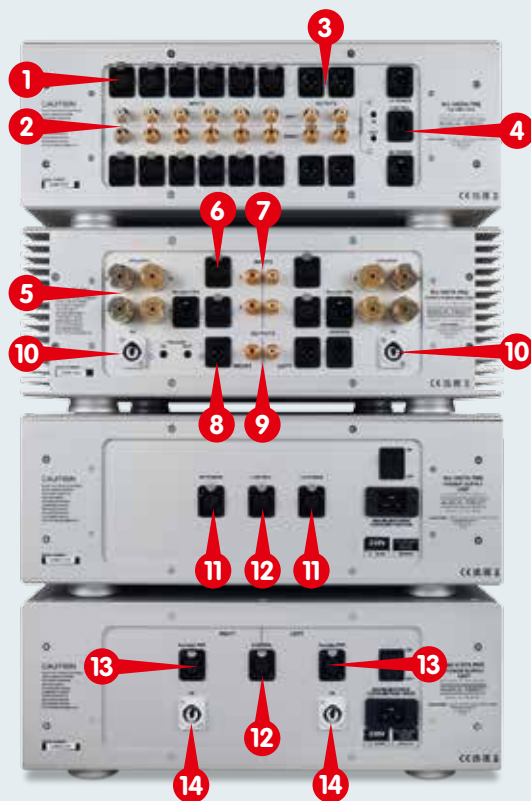
## Sound quality

With all those connections made and checked, and the nuvistor lighting turning blue and then extinguished, the amps are placed between an Aurender W20SE server and dCS

**The pre/power setup comes with separate PSUs for each component**



**CONNECTIONS**



- 1 6x balanced XLR inputs (left channel)
- 2 6x RCA inputs
- 3 Balanced XLR outputs (fixed and PRE)
- 4 Preamp PSU connections
- 5 Loudspeaker outs
- 6 2x XLR inputs
- 7 2x RCA inputs
- 8 Balanced XLR outs
- 9 RCA inputs
- 10 Power amp PSU input connections
- 11 Preamp PSU outputs
- 12 Control/sync connections
- 13 Pre-level PSU outputs for power amp
- 14 Main PSU outputs for power amp

**HOW IT COMPARES**

Four-box pre/power amplifiers are thin on the ground, but beefy two/three-box £40k+ combos, some including mono power amps, are more plentiful and diverse. Long term favourites include the Preamp 1.0 and Mono 1.0 amplifiers from Constellation's Inspiration series – a pre and two monos costing £43,500 that offer the full-on flavour of deeply musical and muscular high-end amplification. Then there's the powerful and 'illuminating' performance offered by Chord's Ultima Pre 2 Ref with its partnering Ultima Mono Power Amp 2s available at a heady £55k. Not so deep of pocket? Then great value and even greater power combine in the Michi P5 (HFC 467) preamp and M8 monoblock power amp trio from Rotel – a full 1kW/8ohm for under £15k with a warmly detailed and embracing sound to boot.

This latest Nu-Vista outing is in no way limited to playing audiophile-approved recordings, as is clear with the DSD64 version of Yes' *Roundabout* from *Fragile*. Steve Howe's opening acoustic guitar is hyper realistic, and then the bass, drums and Rick Wakeman's whirling keyboards kick in with a real slam, the Nu-Vista PAS delivering all the grunt and snarl one could want from a Seventies recording, punched into a 2023 listening room with dramatic effect.

And of course the Nu-Vista PRE and PAS combination is more than up to the task of handling full-bore orchestral recordings, including Benjamin Britten's demanding *Four Sea Interludes* from *Peter Grimes* [Edward Gardner/BBC Philharmonic; Chandos CHAN 10658]. Here the subtle evocations of rolling waves in the first three movements are just as thrilling, in their implication, as the explosive, menacing power of the *Storm* interlude as it surges, rumbles and threatens towards its thundering climax. Again, the ability of Musical Fidelity's PRE/PAS pairing to render

**The Nu-Vista brand is certainly setting itself more ambitious targets**

fine detail and the subtleties of orchestral scoring is blended seamlessly with its capacity to release seemingly limitless dynamic power when required while still retaining full control.

**Conclusion**

These sonic qualities are never more in evidence than with the Paavo Järvi/Orchestre de Paris cycle of Sibelius symphonies [RCA Red Seal 19075924512], as is clear from the opening of the very first work where the clarinet solo gives way to a great soaring tide of orchestral playing. Just let the music wash over you... ●

**THE NUVISTOR STORY**

Introduced by RCA in 1959, the nuvistor's brief was simple – tackle all that was deficient in glass-bodied vacuum tubes. By improving on reliability, size, microphony, operating performance (noise, gain, linearity and PSU requirements) and consistency between manufacturing batches, the miniature, metal-bodied nuvistor was rolled out to great fanfare in RCA's television and radio sets. As innovations go, the nuvistor represented a step change in the evolution of vacuum 'tubes', but Germanium transistors were in the ascendant and once

their own reliability/performance issues were addressed by the development of silicon devices, the nuvistor was doomed. These tiny metal cylinders shook the consciousness of our audiophile world again in the late-Nineties when then-owner of Musical Fidelity, Antony Michaelson, acquired a NOS batch. These were deployed in its Nu-Vista Preamplifier before a similar nuvistor line stage found its way into the Nu-Vista 300 amp, CD player and Nu-Vista 800, the latter also the inspiration for the four-box PRE/PAS we have here.

Vivaldi One APEX SACD player/DAC, here running in balanced 'line out' mode, and B&W 801 D4 (HFC 482) floorstanders. And what a combination this makes: from the very opening of Vangelis' remastered *Pulsar*, it is clear that these heavyweight Nu-Vista amps deliver an impression of unburstable power and resolution, the sound imbued with great clarity, detail and confidence, even at very high basic playback levels.

But even more impressive is the sympathetic handling of instrumental tone, as in the beautifully focused view of the guitar on Peter Frampton's take on Roxy Music's *Avalon* from his *...Forgets The Words* covers album, alongside the laidback rhythm section. It's a balance also well suited to *Make Me Rainbows* from the Bill Charlap

Trio's *Notes From New York* set, which is delivered with both crisp detail and plenty of dynamic punch.

Switch to Patricia Kopatchinskaja's reading of the *Janacek Violin Sonata* on her *Bartók Janacek Brahms* recital and there's a spine-tingling sense of the rapport between violinist and pianist Fazil Say, which is even more intense in the *Adagio* of the *Bartók Sonata*. In practice, this recording is less about the accompanied violin and more about the duet performance as a whole, and that's exceptionally clear via these Nu-Vista PRE/PAS amps.

The sound is all about character and performance, as is clear with Peter Gabriel's track on the *Here It Is* Leonard Cohen tribute album. The recording is closely detailed and these amplifiers let every detail of that intimacy flood out.

**Hi-Fi Choice**

**OUR VERDICT**

**SOUND QUALITY** ★★★★★ **LIKE:** Massive slam; ability to reveal recording subtleties

**VALUE FOR MONEY** ★★★★★ **DISLIKE:** A bit hefty

**BUILD QUALITY** ★★★★★ **WE SAY:** A stunning setup that, though far from cheap, is still remarkable value for money by high-end standards

**FEATURES** ★★★★★

**OVERALL** ★★★★★