Emotional content

Great hi-fi is partly about making you feel special and Ed Selley reckons that this compact combination is a master of the art. Early on in the magnificent film Enter The Dragon, Bruce Lee exclaims to a young apprentice “Don’t think, feel!” For the avoidance of doubt, Mr Lee was referring to the emotional state required to knock the stuffing out of your opponent with martial arts rather than anything pertaining to hi-fi, but within that gloriously over-enunciated statement is something that is entirely relevant to the concept of Beautiful Systems. We seek out engineering integrity, technical wizardry and stunning aesthetics, but over and above these things we celebrate their ability to feel special and, by extension, to make you feel special using them. Often, this comes at a substantial price, and is easier to create when you have the budget. The system you see here, however, is notable because it has this quality in spades and while it’s not what you’d call cheap, it is very keenly priced. It also goes a long way to fulfilling the more definable constructs of engineering and technical ability. Of course, as the electronics in this system are from Primare, this should not be too surprising. The DD15 CD transport and I15 Prisma integrated amp are from the lower levels of the company’s range, but
still encapsulate everything that Primare consistently does so well. This is a 21st-century take on the amp and CD player combo. The I15 does most of the heavy lifting as it contains both the amplification and decoding. The Class D amp claims 2x60W into 8ohm and 2x100W into 4ohm and is compact enough to ensure that the extra functionality can be comfortably accommodated in the compact chassis.

**Format friendly**

Five digital inputs are joined by a UPnP network section that supports almost any format that you care to throw at it. In direct contrast, the DD15 has decoding on five digital inputs is handled by an AKM AK4490 DAC, which ensures that the DD15 and I15 reflect very well in making sure you feel. Lacking a knob on either component, the DD15 and I15 reflect that in reality, more than a single, well turned control, Primare does casework and points of customer contact at a level that makes many rivals feel homemade. Simply extracting them from their packaging generates a feeling of considerable well-being. There’s no unnecessary flourishes here, but the execution is so good the product feels like a flagship in itself. The crisp white-on-black displays and lovely Primas control app only strengthen the sentiment.

The DD15 and I15 do casework and points of contact so well that rivals feel homemade back of your neck standing up. Combine this with electronics that are as consistently joyous to listen to as the Primares, and you have a setup that constantly makes you want to try different albums on it. And it is here that the details combine to make this system more than the sum of its parts. Things like the Falcon’s impressive ability to sound just as compelling at low levels than the sum of its parts. Things like the Falcon’s impressive ability to extract them from their packaging generates a feeling of considerable well-being. There’s no unnecessary flourishes here, but the execution is so good the product feels like a flagship in itself. The crisp white-on-black displays and lovely Primas control app only strengthen the sentiment.

Above left: The RAM Studio 10 uses traditional materials in a way that feels modern and comfortable. Above right: Exquisite Scandinavian design and metalwork is the order of the day. The RAM Studio 10, by contrast, takes traditional materials and still manages to feel contemporary.

**Viceless to live with, it has a spec that performs almost any role you can think of**

The RAM Studio 10, by contrast, takes traditional materials and still manages to feel contemporary. Walnut and leather in combination bring to mind British sports cars or maybe an antique bureau, but here – thanks to leaving the walnut without lacquer and encasing more of the cabinet in leather – the standmount feels bang up to date. The system as a whole is a perfectly balanced balance of subtlety, elegance and functionality. It is possible to spend a great deal more and end up with something a whole lot less satisfying to spend time with.

**Keeping it real**

With the DD15 feeding Yazz Ahmed’s La Sultane to the I15 for decoding and amplification, the Primare duo is the sonic manifestation of its wonderful externals. This is a piece of music that retains a superb recording and every nuance is delivered with an effortless feeling of realism and presence. Ahmed’s trumpet has the breadth of expression of a voice and here is effortlessly reproduced. Listen for 30 minutes or so and the really clever part of this starts to make itself felt. Balancing the desire for realism and immediacy with the consideration you want presentation to be something you can enjoy long term without feeling fatigued is one of the great balancing acts of the I15. This also shows Primare is an absolute master at it. At every stage, across a huge variety of music, there is never a trace of softness or lack of dynamics, and equally you can spend a whole day in their company and feel it is no great undertaking to do so.

**The right stuff**

Of course, the Falcon plays its role in this too. This is my first meaningful interaction with the brand, but based on this I’m going to have to seek it out more often. It offers an intriguing blend of the classic British monitor speaker with something rather more invigorating. The monitor bit is easy enough to experience. Hayden Thorpe’s Driver is unfurled and superbly immediate. The combination of his falsetto and supporting parts is simply and beautifully right. There is never anything less than a compellingly real take on the music being played. Where the RAM Studio 10 goes the extra mile is the endless feeling of joy it brings to music. It’s exceptionally agile, but combines this with a level of bass weight that is impressive for a cabinet this size. It manages to convey the feeling what you are hearing is an accurate and unvarnished take on the music being played, but it also has a midrange that has you revisiting music that you love time and time again because it gets the hairs on the back of your neck standing up. Every time I’ve sat down to listen to this system, I’ve ended up happier than when I started... and it doesn’t get much better than that.