



Musical Fidelity M5si £1,800

Now owned by Heinz Lichtenegger of Pro-Ject fame, this British brand has been a major player in affordable integrations for decades

DETAILS

- PRODUCT**
Musical Fidelity M5si
- ORIGIN**
EU/Taiwan
- TYPE**
Integrated amplifier
- WEIGHT**
14.6kg
- DIMENSIONS**
(WxHxD)
440 x 100 x 405mm
- FEATURES**
 - Quoted power output: 2x 150W (8ohm)
 - Inputs: 4x RCA; asynchronous USB-B; MM phono;
 - 24-bit/96kHz DAC
- DISTRIBUTOR**
Henley Audio Ltd.

It all started for Musical Fidelity in the mid-Eighties with the A1 – an iconic amp that’s just been relaunched. Superb as this full Class A classic is, it’s too niche for consideration here, thanks to its low power and specialist orientation. Instead the M5si is a far superior all-rounder offering a flare-flapping 150W RMS per channel into 8ohm.

Despite its very pleasing modern styling, this is quite an old-school device in terms of functionality. Its only concession to modernity is a built-in 24-bit/96kHz-capable DAC with a single USB-B input. Oddly, though, there’s no optical or coaxial digital inputs – and you can forget about streaming as standard. Still, like most in this group, it at least boasts a moving-magnet phono stage.

Although similarly sized to all the others, the M5si is the heaviest here – thanks, no doubt, to the heatsinking that’s needed to keep this Class AB design cool. It is nicely built, styled and finished, and has the feel of affordable esoterica. The classy volume control and other switchgear makes it feel like it’s the cheapest version of a high-end product line, rather than the other way round. Its four line inputs should be enough for

most people. The fixed-line output – what used to be called tape out, back in the old days – will be appreciated by some, as will the variable preamp output. As per all the other amplifiers featured here, all socketry is RCA, not balanced XLR.

Sound quality

The Musical Fidelity M5si sounds extremely clear, clean and crisp, with wide soundstaging and fine depth perspective. This is backed up by a taut, strong bass that’s always there but never overblown. At the opposite end of the frequency spectrum, there’s plenty of detail on show along with a touch of added sweetness. You could say that this seeps down into the midband too, as this amplifier sounds considerably less coloured than the Exposure – it’s very subtle.

This marks out the M5si as a very strong performer across the board; it doesn’t prefer one certain type of musical genre. Rather, it breezes into whatever recording it’s asked to reproduce and has fun. On the Zero 7 track, for example, it gives a very detailed rendition of the song. It’s fast on leading edges, making for a brisk, snappy sound that conveys rhythms well – yet it isn’t as obviously engaging as the Naim.

The Isaac Hayes track comes over very impressively, even though this amp doesn’t add much in the way of euphoric colouration. Bass is fluid and positive, with effortless power but doesn’t sound artificially padded out – in this respect it reminds me of the Cyrus. It’s good with vocal timbre, and conveys the true nature of the recording better than most here, especially the Technics, which obfuscates things somewhat.

Turn up the volume and it really shines, especially when powering tricky loads like the Neat Majistra. On the Who track it demonstrates the biggest dynamic kick, even more so than the Exposure, which is this group’s other big hitter power-wise. There’s lots of control and the sound stays consistent at very high levels. It never descends into harshness, but is tonally slightly better lit than some here. All of which makes it a great option for reggae music; The Congos’ track is great fun, thanks to its crisp, open and intricate sound ●



Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY
★★★★★ **LIKE:** Clean, musical sound; power; build

VALUE FOR MONEY
★★★★★ **DISLIKE:** No coaxial or optical digital inputs

BUILD QUALITY
★★★★★ **WESAY:** Great sound and fantastic value

FEATURES
★★★★★

OVERALL
★★★★★