



# Flagship Ahoy!

Renowned master Cambridge Audio has once again taken their flagship ahead with their exemplary Azur 840E and 840W stereo amplifier.

**C**ambridge Audio really has their work cut out for themselves. Their primary market being in the mid- and hi-end sectors of home-entertainment, where competition has never been anything short of relentless, Cambridge Audio has held their own for years now. We've had the opportunity to review several of their products spawned for their Azur series, so when the 840E pre-amplifier and 840W power amplifier from this range came in for a review, we were quite prepared for them.

## OUT OF THE BOX

We absolutely love the curvy edged aluminium chassis the Azurs come housed in, and we've almost always got the silver finished ones, including this pair. Needless to say, when you're talking power amplifiers, you're talking heavy, and the same holds true for the 840W. But it looks stunning with a simple power button and a couple of little dots for the bluish LEDs across the front panel marking the output speaker settings. The top sides of the chassis have wide cuts in it for heat dispersion, but laid out keeping symmetry in mind so that overall aesthetics of the power amplifier aren't compromised. As for the 840E, its size and weight is a lot lesser than the 840W, and the front panel has a lot more happening on it, but not to an overcrowded

## SPECIFICATIONS

<b>840E (PRE-AMPLIFIER)</b>
<b>TOTAL HARMONIC DISTORTION (THD)</b>
<0.0015%
<b>FREQUENCY RESPONSE</b> 10Hz–50kHz
<b>SIGNAL-TO-NOISE RATIO (SNR)</b> >100dB
<b>DAMPING FACTOR</b> NA
<b>DIMENSIONS (H x W x D)</b> 4.6" x 17.2" x 15.4"
<b>WEIGHT</b> 8.7kgs
<b>840W (POWER AMPLIFIER)</b>
<b>POWER OUTPUT</b> 200-watts Per Channel at 8Ω / 500-watts Mono Into 8Ω In Bridged Mode
<b>TOTAL HARMONIC DISTORTION (THD)</b>
<0.001%
<b>FREQUENCY RESPONSE</b> 5Hz–80kHz
<b>SIGNAL-TO-NOISE RATIO (SNR)</b> >90dB
<b>DAMPING FACTOR</b> >125 at 1kHz
<b>DIMENSIONS (H x W x D)</b> 5.9" x 17.2" x 14.6"
<b>WEIGHT</b> 19.1kgs
<b>CONTACT</b> <a href="http://www.fxentertainment.in">www.fxentertainment.in</a>

degree. A large enough bluish LED sits at the centre, with little input buttons lined across both sides of it. The trademark volume knob is on the right-most side with the power button on the other extreme. An aesthetic masterpiece that would fit as well in your living room as it would up in the clouds, under God's own flat screen television.

## TECHNOLOGY

Since this is the highest you're going to get from the Azur series as far as amplification is concerned, we're talking of expensive and knowing Cambridge Audio, effective



technology as well. Taking the 840W first, this beast can be bi-amped or bridged-mono, depending on what you'd like to use it as, a single power amplifier that amplifies the highs and lows individually or as a mono block. If you pick the former, you're getting 200-watts pumped through your speakers in totality, but divided individually between the tweeter and the woofer. If you pick the latter, the 840W converts into a 500-watt mono block, which needs to be coupled with another 840W for stereo amplification. All this can be done with a little tweaking of switches and connections.

The 840W comes with Class XD technology, a type of amplification technology that switches from Class A to Class B amplification as the levels are increased through Crossover Displacement.





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This reduces levels of distortion drastically when compared to Class AB amplification because it's giving the sound pure Class B technology with the help of an oversized toroidal transformer with a silicon-steel screen. That explains the weight.

The 840E has some very interesting things going on inside of it as well, starting with the cleverly named Terrapin Modules. Rather than going in for the conventional op-amps (operational amps) for the low level gain stages, Cambridge Audio had been developing these ten-pin (that's why the 'Terra-' in Terrapin Modules) low-noise, low-distortion amplifier modules as an independent project. These, as Cambridge-Audio claims, out perform the standard op-

amps. This technology couples well with the Class XD rating of the power-amplifier as far as low-level amplification is concerned, as it is a critical level for any amplifier to function in.

Along with this, the 840E contains an individual array of relays and resistors positioned along each channel to improve the stereo separation and imaging performance. At the same time, the volume and balance control are done with a sophisticated resistor ladder and relay-based attenuator that provides a 1dB incremental volume adjustment, positioning Mute or the 0 value of the Volume knob way down at -95dB. So you're cranking up the volume knob quite-a-ways up before actually getting the moderate listening level you desire.

#### REMOTE CONTROL

Like most Cambridge Audio controllers, this sleek silver remote resembles the device it is built to control beautifully. The ergonomics of the circular buttons could have been better with simplicity in the controls resonating straight from the simplicity of the 840E's aesthetics. As far as range goes, you can work with this remote from any corner of the room, with the slightest touch of the buttons.

#### PERFORMANCE

It took a couple of hands to get the 840W into our studio, and since we were running out of space, we had to place these guys on the ground next to each other. We would have loved to hook these guys up to the Azur 840C upsampling CD player as Cambridge Audio asks of us,



**FROM AN IMPECCABLE IMAGING TO THE THEATRICAL SONIC DISPLAY OF LOW-LEVEL AMPLIFICATION, THIS IS THE FLAGSHIP PRODUCT OF CAMBRIDGE AUDIO.**



**TRIED & TESTED**

**BACH'S 6 SUITES ON THE CELLO**



J. S. BACH  
Vivace  
No. 1  
A. V. Kozlovskiy

This SACD is brimming with dynamics that only a cello player can bring to an album. From extremely soft parts to powerful transients spread through the soundstage with natural room reverb, this CD is worth the bucks, be it for testing or simple audio pleasure.

**SACD**

but we didn't have it so we had to stick to our reference Denon player. We had a pair of Wharfedale Evo Signature towers hooked up to the 840W, a pair of speakers that seemed apt enough on their specification chart to match the power rating of the 840W. We also had ourselves a neat pile of CDs to test through them.

We started with something delicate enough for the Class XD and the Terrapin Modules to show what they are capable of, namely Hidemi Suzuki's rendition of 'Bach's 6 Suites' on the cello. The dynamics of his playing are exquisite and we first had the levels set very low to see just how well the 840E and 840W handle it. The lowest parts of the cello were so close to silence that we had to pay special attention to the sound, but when our ears caught it, we heard the dynamic range of the cello, from the loudest run of the bow to the softest legato in perfect balance with each other. By that we mean that the lowest parts sounded low in perfect proportion to the strongest parts. And this we confirmed by cranking the volume up to a moderate level and listening to the very same part of the first track. And along with this confirmation, we also got to hear the subtlety with which the 840W took apart the reverberations of the cello and the finger movements of Hidemi across the fret board.

The 840E gave us its high sensitivity to the cello by letting us hear Hidemi's breath as he breathed out during the long pulls of the bow. It was mesmerising with the lights turned off.

The Wharfedales do have a reputation for being a little too laid back when it comes to authoritative amplifiers such as these guys, so we switched them in for our Bowers & Wilkins bookshelves and dropped in MJ's 'Dangerous' for a more percussive testing environment. The imaging we were getting for tracks such as "Jam" and "Dangerous" was incredible, the 840E placing Jackson's voice at dead centre. The great part about his singing and mixing is that in the verses he loved to sing with a held-back voice that was raring to scream out, and then finally unleashed his emotions in the choruses, really filling up the mix at that point. This feature was exceptionally well illustrated with these amplifier monsters, and not just in this album but even Jamiroquai's 'Dynamite'.

You'll notice that the entire mix of the album has been kept very rich on the upper half of the frequency range primarily because Jamiroquai's voice lies in that region. The scary thing about that is that if an amplifier or a pair of speakers aren't balanced enough, they will cause almost immediate ear fatigue and pain,

which thankfully, the 840E and 840W didn't do. Instead they used the high frequency range like a fine white line is used to outline a painting of darker shades. The soundstage was overwhelming to say the least, and this coming out of a pair of bookshelves was even more overwhelming. Especially when we played something less percussion dependent and more string oriented — Stockholm Guitar Quartet playing 'Bach's Allegro from Brandenburg Concerto No.3'. Here, the multiple guitars can so easily be mixed up with one another even though the timbre of each of these guitars is different, if only mildly. We could hear a wall of guitars playing in the space between our bookshelves, some even spreading behind the speakers, involving the entire room like it was an ever resonating chamber.

**CONCLUSION**

Staying true to the Azur series, the 840E and the 840W are a remarkable pair to listen to, their only shortcoming being that they weren't ours. The price is hi-end but the technology the pair comes housing sure makes it worthwhile. From an impeccable imaging performance to an almost theatrical sonic display of low-level amplification, these guys are truly the flagship amplifiers of Cambridge Audio. And they hold the flag high enough to take on the audiophile-grade competitors the world has to offer.

**Karan Gour**



**CAMBRIDGE AUDIO**

MODEL >> AZUR 840E PRE-AMPLIFIER / 840W CLASS XD POWER AMPLIFIER

CATEGORY >> STEREO AMPLIFIER

PRICE >> Rs 76,000/ Rs 1,10,000

WARRANTY >> 1 YEAR

<b>AESTHETICS</b> ★★★★★	<b>WHAT SAY AV?</b> Surely not the cheapest pair of pre- and power-amplifiers money can buy; Cambridge Audio's Azur 840E preamplifier and 840W Class XD power amplifier are filled to the brim with innovative technology that is so transparent that it can be heard in whatever you might be listening to. Be sure to hook them up to an authoritative pair of speakers that have been built to take on the challenge of delivering a pure, distortion-free soundstage.
<b>BUILD</b> ★★★★★	
<b>AUDIO</b> ★★★★★	
<b>EASE OF USE</b> ★★★★☆	
<b>VFM</b> ★★★★★	

**AV MAX OVERALL SCORE** ★★★★★