



AMPLIFICATION

INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER

CYRUS ONE



Longstanding UK hi-fi brand Cyrus updates a classic amplifier with Bluetooth and app control, while ornamenting the compact front panel with two lovely big knobs and some smart lights.

The original Cyrus One was released 34 years ago in 1984, in golden days when this electronics brand partnered Mission loudspeakers in the UK and shared their rise at the centre of a Brit-Fi world invasion of high-quality mid-price UK-based hi-fi in the subsequent decade.

Most of those names have since been through two decades of changing hands, qualities and countries, but Cyrus remains in private hands, its HQ still in the UK's Cambridgeshire, where it not only designs and prototypes but also still manufactures its distinctive 'half-width' hi-fi.

That's half-width, but not exactly half-size. The Cyrus approach is more like putting the fascia on the short end of the chassis, so the Cyrus One is unusually deep — 35cm, and more like 45cm including the two spectacular front knobs plus room to insert banana plugs at the rear.

It's a unique look which Cyrus has made and kept its own since the beginning. But we must say we applaud the new front panel layout of this latest version, with none of the clicky buttons and weird displays of the past, just two big knobs on a black gloss fascia, with a cutaway below for the power switch, the IR receiver and a quarter-inch

headphone socket. Nice. It's a solid purposeful look, for what turns out to be a solid purposeful amplifier. It launched in Australia at \$1299, but distributor Indi Imports tells us that it is available at \$999 for a limited time, partly celebrating the arrival of a Cyrus One HD, which adds more digital inputs to the Bluetooth on offer here.

PERFORMANCE

The Bluetooth has a second function beyond music streaming — Cyrus has made a remote control app available for iOS and Android. Since there's no networking here, this app connects via low power Bluetooth, giving you the ability to control volume, source selection (shown)





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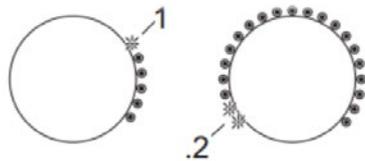
and other settings. But beyond that, the Cyrus One is staunchly analogue in its inputs — four RCA analogue stereo pairs, one phono input and ground link for a turntable, plus a pair of pre-outs. No optical or USB connections here... those are what the new One HD model adds.

So the traditional hi-fi fan may celebrate — turntable, CD, or direct input from the stereo outputs of a good Blu-ray player, plus Bluetooth for all that newfangled app stuff. The 'AV' input can also be put into AV Direct mode, removing the volume control from the circuit so the AV input is full level, ideal for using the Cyrus for front speakers under the control of an AV receiver or AV preamp's own volume control. So not as inflexible as it looks. Perhaps there's sense in Cyrus defining its own position so firmly.

Is this all a push for purity? Back in days gone by, it was considered by many to be borderline evil to have a computer in the same room as your analogue hi-fi, let alone microprocessors and digital circuits actually inside your amplifier spewing EMF all over your delicate and sensitive analogue pathways. But that thought train would likely lead to the use of Class-AB amplification, whereas Cyrus here uses Class D — or specifically the third generation of the company's own Class-D circuit, which is quoted as delivering $2 \times 100W$ into six ohms at 0.1% THD+N.

You get a whizzbang light show from the front panel as you power it on, a circular rippling of all the LEDs around the left 'selector' knob and right 'volume' knob before the Cyrus settles into its duties with an audible speaker pop. These lights prove rather smart. For example if you're performing a firmware update, as did we (it was required to get the Bluetooth app working), you restart the amp and press mute five times, then the lights on the panel indicate the current firmware — 1.2 in our case (as on the diagram shown right). Version 1.3 was required for the Bluetooth remote app.

We warmed it up with casual TV audio duties for several weeks, connected in analogue stereo from our Oppo Blu-ray player



and from our TV optically via a little Arcam DAC. It never put a foot wrong, driving our TV-side standmount speakers with authority, and plenty in reserve for some big movie moments. It remained powered up throughout this time, and simply did its job with authority and barely a hint of stress, not even running warm from the efficient exertion of that Class-D wattage.

We weren't impressed with the supplied remote control, a small 'credit-card' remote which compounds its cheapness by having no priority given to its main volume and mute commands. It's also easy to operate upsidedown in a darkened TV room (assuming you can find it). It's a misconsidered saving to supply such a cheap ratty control as the main user interface for such a lovely amplifier.

We reconnected the Cyrus One to our reference speakers, Musical Fidelity USB DAC and Thorens turntable — well-timed for the last of these, as since we'd just attended a local record fair and had three bags full of vinyl to test out, in addition to our usual suspects. While many amplifier manufacturers must be rushing to acquaint themselves with the niceties of phono stage design, Cyrus has never

SOUNDKEY – OPENING WINDOWS

Cyrus recently broke out of its component hi-fi series to release the soundkey, a super-compact DAC and headphone amp that can be used with smartphones and computers. Just 54mm long weighing just 18 grams and available in various colours (right), it ain't going to bust your hand-luggage allowance, yet aims to raise audio quality from these devices into something more hi-fi.

At one end is a 3.5mm stereo audio socket for your headphones (you can also use it as a line output to an amplifier). At the other is a Micro-B USB socket, and the soundkey comes with a nicely styled Micro-B USB to Micro-B USB cable for use with many Android phones, along with a standard USB Type-A to Micro-B USB cable. You can use that one with a computer, or plug it into an Apple Lightning-to-USB Camera Adapter and plug the adapter into the Apple device. This works with the iPod touch and iPhone, as well as iPads.



Clearly Cyrus' high fidelity heritage has been brought to bear. All our music sounded excellent. Had we not known what device was being employed, we'd have been hard put to say that it wasn't a high-end DAC and headphone amplifier. Even with fairly complex music, it remained smooth, yet powerful.

At \$169 the soundkey proved both convenient and delivered excellent sound into just about any sensible set of headphones.

left vinyl behind, and the moving magnet stage here proved a fine one, delivering a delightfully tight but full bass from our Thorens TD 203 and allowing its open delivery of treble to shine. It was equally enjoyable through the Cyrus One's excellent headphone section, which drove a visiting pair of Focal Utopia headphones wonderfully as we spun our black discs. Back on digital content (via a DAC) the top-end felt sometimes a little insistent, and playing loud we sometimes found ourselves wanting just a little more finesse. Backed off to the level at which most people play music, though, this was a perfectly enjoyable amplifier.

CONCLUSION

Analogue fans can celebrate the One's excellent phono stage and vinyl performance with all-round enjoyable delivery from this purposeful and usefully neat Cyrus amplifier design — especially at the price for which it is currently offered. Need digital inputs? Then seek out the new Cyrus One HD. ■

Cyrus One integrated amplifier

- High quality DAC, high quality power
- Excellent USB computer playback
- High quality phono and headphone stages
- No networking (yet... module 'to come')

Price: \$999 (limited-time price)

Inputs/sources: phono input (mm);

4 x RCA line in; Bluetooth with aptX

Quoted power: 2 x 100W (website) or 2 x 110W (manual) into 6 ohms, 0.1% THD+N

Outputs: preouts, 6.5mm headphone out;

4 x speakers out (two sets for biamping)

Quoted response: 6Hz-50kHz (-3dB)

Dimensions (whd): 220 x 86.5 x 390 mm

Weight: 5.6kg

Contact: Indi Imports

Telephone: 03 9416 7037

Web: www.indiimports.com

