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## Anthem 225 Integrated Amplifier Review

### Anthem 225 Integrated Amplifier Review

By [Luther Ward](#)



htshack.com

#### Introduction

I think for many of us into audio, our systems evolve over time. We learn as we go by reading reviews, auditioning new gear, talking with friends and spending time on forums. Our system(s) get better, our taste refines and we are happy traveling farther down the audio road to nirvana. Although at times, we may get a little blinded by our new found improvements. We keep looking forward and lose sight of where we came from or what we have loved in the past. I'm guilty of this. Some of my systems have grown into some rather high end gear, where I start looking for the weakest link. Things I used to laugh about are creeping into my vocabulary and thought processes. As my grandmother would say, I'm getting a little too big for my britches. Then I find a piece of gear sitting on a shelf that I used to love but haven't listened to in years, I see a piece of gear online I have sold and remember the aural magic, or I visit a friend and hear a piece I used to own and relive the bliss. Then sometimes, I find a new piece that reminds me to keep an open mind, to not discount something I haven't heard and to practice what I preach; namely that there are many roads to audio nirvana.

Today that new piece is the Anthem 225 integrated solid state amplifier. For those of you who know me, you're thinking but you're a separates guy. Your systems are tubes and mono blocks. Well, you would be right, but remember what I said about keeping an open mind, because you may find something that opens your eyes and ears. The Anthem 225 is one of those pieces of equipment. Here are just a few of the highlights:

- 225 watts into 8 ohms (4 ohm capable)
- built in phono stage
- balanced inputs

- tone controls with bypass
- headphone amp
- 12v trigger
- learning remote control



### Build Quality, Appearance and Functionality

The first thing you will notice, even before you take the 225 out of the box, is it is heavy. The 225 is substantial measuring 17 1/4"W x 5 7/8"H x 18"D and tips the scales just over 42.5 pounds. Think of your HT receiver that most likely is almost twice as tall but weights less. Anthem has done a fantastic job of keeping it simple and putting their

money into design, layout and execution. Part of the weight may be attributed to the solid chassis and aluminum faceplate but most can be found in the massive toroidal transformer and large heat sinks. This isn't about bling but building an amplifier that will be a solid performer year after year. Not that the 225 isn't stylish. This is an attractive amplifier, with its anodized faceplate and clean lines that will fit in with the most discriminating audio enthusiast's system.

The front panel is sleek with controls that include a power button with a blue LED power on indicator, a large volume control with a mute button just below, balance, treble and bass controls with a tone defeat button, headphone jack, input selector buttons for Phono, CD, Balanced, Aux 1 - 4 with # 4 3.5mm portable media input on the front panel and recorder button. Yes, you read correctly, there is a built in MM phono input for all you vinylphiles and newbies just getting in to spinning black disks.

The clean layout continues on the back with two rows of connectors. The top row starts with a pair of XLR balanced inputs followed by an RS-232 interface, 12 Volt trigger in / out, and infra-red receiver in / out. The bottom row has inputs for Phono with ground, CD, three Aux and Recorder (Tape for us old guys). There are Record Out, Pre Out, speaker outputs, power cord and fuse. All of these giving the user a very versatile array of options.

Don't let the minimalist approach to the look fool you into what is underneath this wolf in sheep's clothing. Anthem has gone to great lengths to build an audiophile class integrated with high quality and close tolerance parts like metal film resistors and high-quality film signal capacitors. Great attention has been spent designing from the ground up with hand laid PCB traces to optimize the ground plain layout and a robust power supply to give the listener a silent black background.

Speaking of the power supply, the heart of the 225 starts with a massive advanced generation toroidal transformer that feeds two low-ESL, low-ESR Nichicon filter capacitors with a total capacitance of 30,000 microfarads (yes, that is a lot). This clean power drives a fully symmetrical complementary Class AB design output stage with three pair of high-quality bipolar output devices per channel. What you get is 105 dB signal-to-noise ratio, the lowest possible total harmonic distortion, extreme linearity, effortless response and extensive bandwidth. All while minimizing power consumption.

Continuing with their world class approach is the 225's built in phono stage for high-quality Moving Magnet phono cartridges. It uses a split active/passive equalization topology. Active equalization of the low-frequencies occurs at the 50Hz and 500Hz roll-off points. The high-frequency equalization remains passive beginning at 2122Hz insuring you still get every nuance of the original recording. Only two dual high-quality op-amps are used to minimize components in the signal path. The first provides all of the gain and the second is configured as a buffer to isolate the equalization filter network from the volume control.

The premium parts continue with a motorized analog potentiometer style volume control to give you precise control, robust 5-way binding posts for maximum connection flexibility, large computer-designed and modeled heat sinks to keep the 225 running cool, and gold plated RCA jacks for superior signal transfer.

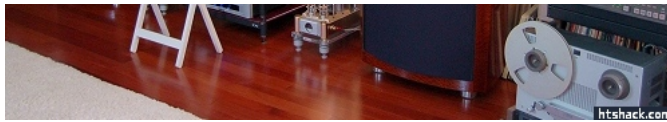
Last, but not least, is the remote control. The remote feels good in the hand with most buttons easily in reach of your thumb. What I really like is it is back lit. I know I beat this dead horse all the time, but I hate remotes I cannot see in low light. A big plus is the learning feature that allows you to remove some other remotes from your arsenal. I didn't need to do that, but I can see that being handy for some.

### The Different Systems

This review is a little different. I wanted to try the 225 in three different systems to get a better idea of how it would perform given different demands each system would place on it. I can say the 225 did amazingly well in all three systems.

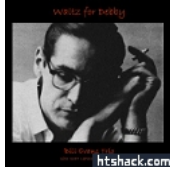
#### System 1





I started first with my main two channel system that I am intimately familiar with. I replaced my pre and tube mono block amps with the 225. The sources are a Clearaudio Champion II table with an SME 309 arm and Benz Micro cartridge, a Shanling CD-T1500 SACD player and a Tascam BR-20 reel to reel. The speakers are DIY using an Altec 511 horn with an Altec 802-85 driver, JBL 077 tweeter and JBL 2235H woofer.

#### **Bill Evan – Waltz for Debbie (reel to reel)**



First up is a classic, one of my favorites and possibly one of the best live jazz recordings ever. This tape is about as good as it gets both musically and from a production stand point. It is a direct copy of the original mix down master tape. The background is dead quiet and there is a lot of detail.

I hit play and listened for the music to start. The tape has a long lead in, so this lets me hear what noise, if any, is coming from the amp. The Anthem 225 is quiet. With nothing to get in the way of the music, the first positive check goes in my notes. From the piano notes hanging on air, to the ring of silverware and glasses in the background, the 225 has nice separation giving detail to the many layers in this recording.

#### **Steely Dan – AJA (vinyl)**



Some of you already know that I am a Steely Dan fan and that AJA is one of my favorite albums of all time. I own eleven copies from around the world. This time around, I chose to spin the Japanese version. I started with side two and "Peg" to hear Jay Graydon's guitar solo, which is essentially a 13 bar blues. The 225 again did a nice job in bringing the instruments to life.

#### **Getz / Gilberto (CD)**



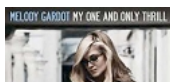
Here is another classic jazz recording and not just another classic but the Best Album of the Year for 1965. The bossa nova grooves throughout are sublime. You most likely will remember "The Girl from Ipanema." Astrud Gilberto, Joao Gilberto's wife, sang here and hearing her again brings a smile to my face. Next, "Desafinado" with Joao singing; his soft voice emerges from the speakers delicately and with a refined detail.

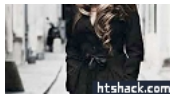
#### **System 2**



Here I replaced a 100 watt per channel tube amp with the 225. Sources are an Oppo 83 and a Roksan Radius 5 table with a Rega arm and cartridge. The speakers are Martin Logan Prodigy. Let's see how the 225 handles the electrostats.

#### **Melody Gardot – My One and Only Thrill (vinyl)**





Now for one of my new found favorites. Not only is Melody Gardot's voice captivating but her life's story is humbling. Do a quick search online and read about her.

I have mentioned in previous reviews that this album is mastered by Bernie Grundman. For me, he is one of the best engineers ever for bringing vocals up front and into your room. Starting with "Baby I'm A Fool", the 225's power gave a nice richness to the bottom end. The imaging is very good, with Melody's voice front and center.

#### Steely Dan – Royal Scam (vinyl)



Back to some Steely Dan so I can get a feel for how the 225 handles music I know very well on a different system. The 225 did not disappoint. From the Larry Carlton guitar solos to Donald Fagen's piano, the music had energy and left me wanting more.

#### Dave Matthews Band – Big Whiskey & the Groogrux King (CD)



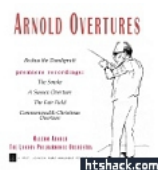
Now it is time to up the tempo, turn up the volume and get some air moving in the room. Here the 225 stepped up to the plate and delivered. The electrostats can be a difficult load to drive and they love power. The 225 brought them to life with a full dynamic sound. From the snare hit in "Funny the Way It Is" to the driving beat of "Why I Am," the sound was solid with a lot of punch, but still blended well with the mid and upper ranges.

#### System 3



The last system is more or less vintage. I replaced my pre and amp with the 225. The sources are a Krell CD1 CD player and a Teac X-1000M reel to reel. The speakers are JBL C50 Olympus with custom JBL 2397 Smith horns and JBL 2405 tweeters.

#### Malcolm Arnold/London Philharmonic Orchestra: Arnold Overtures (reel to reel)



Here is another direct master tape copy for some dynamic music of a full orchestra. Once again, the 225 power made the difference in bringing an orchestra in full crescendo to life. It filled the room with a majestic and bold gusto that brought authority to the music. Not only did the 225 produce a real soundstage but one with weight to it. Once again the separation between instruments allowed each to be heard individually without smearing or sounding muddy.

#### Diana Krall – Love Scenes (CD)



With the 225's lack of a sonic signature or better yet its neutrality, the 225 allowed Diana's voice to shine through. It felt very intimate, like a smoky bar. The bass line intro to "Peel Me a Grape" was tight and Diana's piano crisp. The laid back tracks were a great way to slow down, relax and enjoy the end to my listening session.

#### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The Anthem 225 reminded me to not think "been there, done that." To get over myself and keep an open mind. If I had not, I would have missed out. There is a lot of bang for your buck here. Regardless of your budget, you owe it to yourself to put the Anthem 225 on your short list to audition. I feel it is a real value and has the versatility to fit in almost any system. It did not matter what I threw at the Anthem 225, it took it and asked for more. It has the power to drive the most demanding speaker and the accuracy and transparency to not get in the way of the music. Add the ease of a plug and play setup and the Anthem 225 is one of the affordable gems in audio.

MSRP \$1799.00

### [Anthem 225 Integrated Amplifier Review Discussion Thread](#)

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~There are many roads to nirvana, while the ultimate goal is the destination, don't forget to enjoy the ride~

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