

# Creek Evolution 50A



**M**ichael Creek has worked hard to make his new entry-level integrated modern and versatile, giving it an alphanumeric OLED display, full electronic switching and backlit fascia buttons. It's also a clever modular design which can take one of three plug-in Sequel Phono MM/MC modules, an optional Ambit FM/AM tuner module (£100) or even an infrared sensor (£25), letting you hide the amp away and operate it via the remote. According to Creek, there will be a plug-in DAC board coming soon, too.

The Evolution 50A is decently finished, but not as slick as any of the others here: the slimline pressed steel casework in particular is disappointingly resonant. The alloy fascia panel looks nice though, and the switchgear works well. Inside, the all-discrete transistor design sports a big toroidal transformer with separate windings for both high and low current analogue, plus logic circuitry. Smaller, parallel power supply smoothing capacitors are used, as opposed to single larger ones, and circuitry is fully balanced – it's rare to see XLR connections on an integrated amplifier at this price.

### SUPERB DYNAMICS

The most musically enjoyable and the least coloured sounding of the group, the Creek gave unalloyed pleasure. It's similar to the Arcam in the wonderfully engaging way it performs, yet has an altogether cleaner and more insightful nature. For example, 'Morning Child' sounded magnificent, the amp showing its taut, tuneful bass, glass-clear midband and sweet, spacious treble to best effect.

Powerful and detailed, this amp nevertheless really impressed in the way it strung all the strands of the



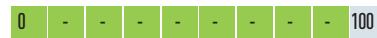
mix together in so natural a way. Vocal phrasing was on another level to all others in the group, and the percussive piano shone through the busy mix like no rivals here.

In 'Lady Writer' everything from bass guitar to hi-hat cymbals shimmered with detail and texture. Vocals were more direct and urgent sounding than with the other amps, yet never sounded strident.

Although it didn't have the sumptuous warmth of the excellent Arcam, the Creek dug even deeper into the musicians' subtle playing inflections to give an eerily lifelike sound. It suited the Mahler especially well, giving everything order and form, making the Arcam sound just a little too louche and the others disjointed by comparison. The result was a lovely, three-dimensional recorded acoustic inside which the orchestra could live and breathe. Here the Creek proved itself the absolute class of the field.

Dynamically it was superb, seemingly having as much in reserve as all save the NAD, and able to keep its powder dry even when called to deliver 'No More I Love You's' at anti-social volumes. It maintained rhythmic cohesion while serving up vast amounts of grunt without complaint. A brilliant all-round performer and epic value for money.

Sound Quality: 85%

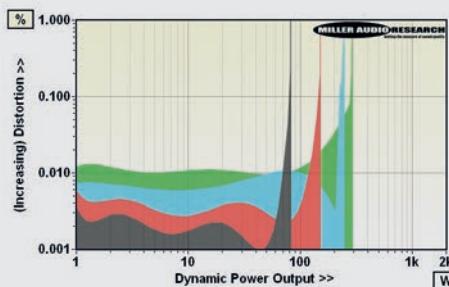


**ABOVE:** Rear panel sports blank sockets for optional Ambit tuner module. Four RCA inputs, one of which is doubled with balanced XLRs. Remote trigger sockets too

**ABOVE:** Chunky brushed alloy fascia and fine-pitch OLED display are impressive, as are the slick-acting back-lit buttons, but the ratty pressed steel case rather lets the side down

### HI-FI NEWS LAB REPORT

Rated at 55W/8ohm, the Evolution 50A still delivers a full 2x64W/8ohm and 2x100W/4ohm with momentary increases to 85W, 155W, 245W and 295W into 8, 4, 2 and 1ohm loads under dynamic, music-like conditions [see Graph]. The output impedance is ~0.04ohm from 20Hz-20kHz so the amp/speaker system response will not vary significantly with swings in speaker impedance. Into a benign 8ohm load the 50A shows a gentle treble roll-off amounting to a mere -0.2dB/20kHz out to -3.8dB/100kHz. This is the first Creek amp to feature balanced inputs and offers an A-wtd S/N ratio of 89dB (re. 0dBW) with hum and noise just -80dBV (0.1mV). Distortion is very consistent from 0.003% at 1W to 0.002% at the rated 50W through bass and midrange, though there's almost inevitably an increase at high frequencies, reaching 0.02% at 20kHz/10W. Channel balance is a tight ±0.01dB at 1W output (re. 500mV in) and stereo separation >70dB through the midrange. PM



**ABOVE:** Dynamic power output versus distortion into 8ohm (black trace), 4ohm (red), 2ohm (blue) and 1ohm loads (green)

|                                     |                          |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Power output (<1% THD, 8/4/ohm)     | 64W / 100W               |
| Dynamic power (<1% THD, 8/4/2/1ohm) | 85W / 155W / 245W / 295W |
| Output impedance (20Hz-20kHz)       | 0.038–0.041ohm           |
| Frequency response (20Hz-100kHz)    | +0.0dB to -3.75dB        |
| Input sensitivity (for 0dBW/55W)    | 134mV / 995mV            |
| A-wtd S/N ratio (re. 0dBW/55W)      | 89.0dB / 106.4dB         |
| Distortion (20Hz-20kHz, 10W/8ohm)   | 0.0009–0.019%            |
| Power consumption (Idle/Rated o/p)  | 9W / 180W                |
| Dimensions (WHD)                    | 430x60x280mm             |