



Power Amplifier of the Year



Audio Research Corporation Reference 160M

Audio Research has a fine reputation for making excellent valve power amplifiers, cemented in place over almost half a century. But in Audio Research's 48 year history, few power amplifiers have been quite so universally praised as the Reference 160M mono power amplifiers.

The company brings several new – or, at least, new to Audio Research – technologies to bear. This is the first power amplifier from the brand to use an innovative microprocessor-controlled auto-bias system, for example, and is the first from the ARC family to be able to switch between ultralinear and triode operation at the touch of a button. And then there's those power meters, cleverly lit by LEDs mounted into the front panel; it's a design that still harks back to classic Audio Research, but is as modern as it gets. The use of four KT150 power valves per channel is new in the valve world, too; Audio Research has been adopting these power valves throughout the range, but this is where they really get to shine.

In our test, we concluded that, "I've played with a number of Audio Research amps over the years, many of which have been some of the most memorable musical experiences I've had, but I can't shake the notion that this is the best of them. It's so musically faithful yet so musically entertaining and enjoyable, this takes the already high standards of Audio Research and raises them to new levels. It delivers grace, space, and no small dose of pace, too."

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