



Viva España

Spain's Vieta Audio is back in the UK with new stereo components. **Ed Selley** rolls out the welcome mat...

While two-channel audio has been staging something of a fight back of late, the bulk of new product has come from existing manufacturers returning to the category, while new arrivals have tended to be at slightly higher price points than ones we would define as entry level. This makes the duo you see here especially interesting. Not only is Vieta Audio returning to the UK after sufficiently long a period of time that it is new for many people (me included), but the products it is returning with are at the affordable end of the market.

The range arriving in the UK is an extensive one. The VH-HA100 amp and VH-CD060 CD player are the

flagship components, however, and find themselves going head to head with the usual suspects in the budget two-channel sector.

The specification of the two units is conventional enough. The HA100 is a 100W design (although the conditions under which this figure is generated such as distortion and impedance are unspecified) with four line inputs on the rear and a single 3.5mm line input on the front, a tape output and a moving magnet phono stage. You also get a full-size headphone socket and switchable A and B speaker outputs as well as a full set of tone and balance controls.

The CD060 is a decidedly minimalist proposition. The mechanism supports

CD and MP3 playback and is decoded courtesy of a Burr-Brown PCM1796 DAC, but in connection terms you are limited to a coaxial and optical output and a single RCA stereo output. This means neither amp nor CD player offer any form of digital input or USB connection, which places them at a disadvantage compared with some of the competition.

The overall build quality of the duo is reasonably solid, but there are some issues across both products that rather spoil the effect. The good news is that the metal casework feels solid and well assembled with thick front panels and good-quality paint finish on all surfaces. The not so good news is that the amp turns up with a slightly bowed rear panel that doesn't inspire a huge amount of confidence. The volume control is also not ideal. To allow for remote control Vieta has used a rotary encoder, which doesn't need to be motorised in the way a conventional potentiometer would, but as there is no display on the amp it is impossible to tell what volume the VH-HA100 will start at, which is likely to catch you out sooner or later.

The CD player also suffers from a noisy and clunky mechanism that is a

DETAILS

PRODUCT

Vieta Audio
VH-HA100/
VH-CD060

ORIGIN
Spain/China

TYPE
Integrated
amplifier/CD player

WEIGHT
4.8kg/4.2kg

DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
430 x 70 x 87mm
430 x 76 x 87mm

FEATURES

- VH-HA100**
- 4x line inputs
 - 1x phono input
 - 1x line output
- VH-CD060**
- 1x phono input
 - 1x line output
 - Blue VFD display

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far cry from anything you would find in a Japanese house brand product at the price. As well as being somewhat inelegant when loading a disc, it is audible when it spins up and seems to introduce noise via the speakers too. While the amp is solid if a little austere, the CD060 simply doesn't feel like a £350 product and given the CD category is currently undergoing something of a squeeze, it doesn't have the shelf appeal that some of the competition does. The remote supplied with the two units is not an ergonomic masterpiece, but is easy to use and covers most of the functions across both products.

Sound quality

With the Vieta components running as a pair and connected to a pair of Neat Iota loudspeakers, the news is rather more positive and suggests that Vieta has been putting the bulk of its attention on the inside rather than the exterior. With the Cinematic Orchestra's *In Motion #1*, the pairing is assured with its presentation of the different musical soundscapes and diverse instrumentation. The massed strings are powerful and well defined and free of any harshness or stridency. There is a useful balance between sounding sufficiently detailed and lively to excite without ever being overly bright. When the altogether harsher recording of UNKLE's *Another Night Out* is wheeled out, the Vietas capture the fury of the piece without reminding you of the rough and ready presentational style.

Splitting the duo up and listening to them separately via my resident Naim ND5XS and Supernait 2 begins to explain the breakdown of roles and responsibilities fairly well. The CD060 is something of an ugly duckling, but it is at least a deeply civilised performer with a richness to the midrange and bass that helps to keep aggressive recordings like the UNKLE

piece sounding listenable. The amplifier is more matter of fact and in many ways more impressive. There is a sense that within the constraints of its price tag, this is a powerful and accurate amplifier. There seems to be no shortage of headroom – substituting the larger Morel Octave 6 presents no issue for it and there is real punch to the low end that makes faster and more bass-driven music sound exciting and engaging.

A final welcome touch from the amp is that both the phono stage and headphone stage are more than simple convenience features. Both are capable of competing with sub-£100 rivals – although the lack of volume marker can prove a real problem

As an opening gambit this augers rather well for the return of Vieta

moving between headphones and speakers, so this is something you should take into account. The phono stage doesn't really suffer from the same issues – it has a useful amount of gain and is acceptably quiet in use. Whether it is going to see more use with the average customer than a digital input is a question I'm not equipped to answer, but if you're after a phono stage-equipped amp, the Vieta makes a good case for itself.

Combining the relative strengths and weaknesses, the pairing manages to be lively and yet ultimately forgiving. It is happy with a variety of music and can drive a wide selection of speakers without any sign of strain. There is little hiding that the HA100 can deliver more with different digital sources. Using a Cambridge Audio DacMagic 100, which is £150 less than the CD060 sees it deliver a slightly leaner, more accurate but still

very civilised performance with FLAC rips of the same CDs. It is hard to ignore that for an extra £50 over the CD player, you can help yourself to Arcam's seriously talented irDAC and put the performance in a different league. There is no doubt that the CD player gains from being in the same company as the amp, but it doesn't necessarily follow that the reverse is true.

Conclusion

The budget two-channel market is a competitive and challenging environment at the moment and it is always good to see a new arrival in it. Vieta has managed to get many of the basics right with these two products. Ultimately, for me at least, it is the HA100 that makes a stronger case for itself while the CD060 is a pleasant enough sounding unit, but faces stiff competition. Slight concerns about the build quality of that rear panel aside, this is a powerful, accurate and very capable amplifier. It forms a happy partnership with the CD060, but equally it is happy with a number of other digital sources that would lend rather greater capability to your home setup. As an opening gambit though, this augers rather well for the return of Vieta ●

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT: VH-HA100

SOUND QUALITY
★★★★★

VALUE FOR MONEY
★★★★★

BUILD QUALITY
★★★★★

FEATURES
★★★★★

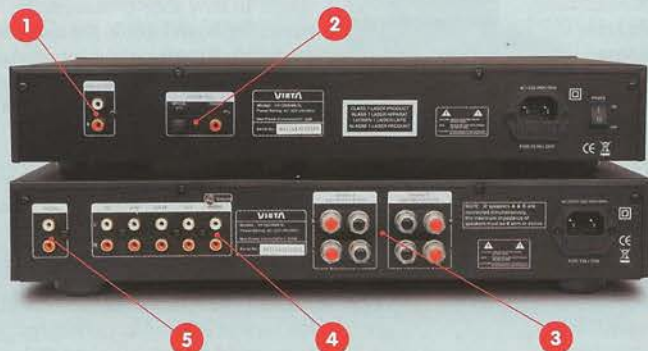
OVERALL
★★★★★

LIKE: Powerful and detailed sound; solid build; useful phono stage input

DISLIKE: No digital inputs; some rough edges to styling

WESAY: An engaging and powerful performer, but a digital input would be nice

CONNECTIONS



- 1 RCA line output
- 2 Digital outputs
- 3 A and B speaker terminals
- 4 Moving magnet phono stage
- 5 Line output

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT VH-CD060

SOUND QUALITY
★★★★★

VALUE FOR MONEY
★★★★★

BUILD QUALITY
★★★★★

FEATURES
★★★★★

OVERALL
★★★★★

LIKE: Build; smooth, unforced sound

DISLIKE: Limited connectivity; noisy mechanism; clunky interface

WESAY: A pleasant enough sounding player that faces stiff competition from better-equipped rivals