

Alta Fidelidad Spain

TEXT by Salvador Dangla

Gryphon Scorpio + Atilla

Maximum refinement in design and technology providing an authentic benchmark from one of the world's "coolest" High End companies. The result? Pure seduction.

Year after year the stand belonging to the Danish company Gryphon at Munich's High End Show manages to give audiophiles that weird but comforting feeling of continuity and of everything remaining the same, a feeling which characterises those brands that have been able to get to the very top of High End, and, more importantly, have been able to maintain their innovative spirit intact in order to remain there.

The Scorpio's interior houses a real abundance of technological refinements, notably, the presence of a 32 bit/192 kHz D/A conversion system, an analogue output system configured in pure Class A, and an magnificent feeding system.

What's more, in its time, Gryphon was able to stand out with a design that was light years ahead of the majority of products in its class available on the market and which it has been refining with the result that now, twenty years later, it still maintains its character intact, that is, its capacity for seduction. In fact, although the Scandinavian company recently changed their importers, their products have been familiar to us since the first half of the 90s when we heard their incredible phono pre-amps and spectacular power amps configured in pure Class A at that well-remembered specialised Barcelona establishment, Amadeus.

Scorpio: making use of the Mikado Signature's innovations

The ever-fascinating classic vanguard styling that characterises Gryphon's external design serves as the introduction to a stylised and tremendously attractive CD player which incorporates some of the Danish company's most relevant technological features. The Scorpio, as our featured product is called, has been entirely designed and built in Denmark, and immediately stands out for the quality of the materials used, though this is no surprise in a product coming from Gryphon. In any case, I reckon that the photos accompanying this test bench trial illustrate my description perfectly; but even so, I would like to point out that the quality of the mechanical parts is impressive, with screws that fit with practically no tolerance whatsoever. What's more, the use of materials with highly differentiated properties has served to configure a neutral acoustic character which reinforces the virtues of the device's electronics.

More than anything, the **truth is that the Scorpio is pure-state technology**, though it is a technology that is not in the least improvised but the fruit of successive, well-studied improvements carried out on models which preceded it, or which rank higher in Gryphon's range. Such is the case of an innovation that we have already seen in some elite Japanese products: the use of asynchronous 32 bit/192 kHz converters from AKM. The Scorpio takes no fewer than four of these sophisticated devices and arranges them in a configuration that can exploit the possibilities of the now "old" - who would have imagined it! – CD to an astonishing degree, after oversampling of the latter's 16 bits/44.1 kHz to 32 bits/192 kHz.

So that everything fits in from a musical point of view, clearly much, much more is needed. And the Gryphon does not fall short in that respect, believe you me, as in its interior we find refinements such as two temperature compensated quartz oscillators, custom-made for Gryphon, whose accuracy is better than 5 parts per million (ppm). What's more, it is equipped with a smooth-slope digital filter to optimise high frequency response, a first-order analogue output filter, analogue circuitry configured in pure Class A and built with discrete components, and a feeding system with regulated voltage sources of +/- 20 V which includes separate toroidal transformers for the analogue and digital sections and nothing less than a reserve of power/capacity filter of 15,000 uF per channel. And all that, of course, with minimised signal paths.

Atila: Gryphon's latest revelation

This is the latest Gryphon to arrive in our country, a product designed for those who want top benchmark performance from electronic signal processing and amplification, but prefer the convenience and compactness of an integrated amplifier. We announced its arrival recently, and **the truth is that the unit being tested here is one of the best – if not *the* best – to arrive in our country**. As with the Scorpio, and by extension, the rest of Gryphon's products, the Atila is a machine with an extremely "cool" design that has been built in the best materials to the most stringent and exacting standards. Among its outstanding features are the detachable feet and the integrated speaker terminals (real luxury, but also practical as they allow the use of any cable you fancy), though, as with the Scorpio, "it's what's inside that really matters". And the truth is that simply reviewing the raft of technological innovations incorporated into the Atila is almost overwhelming. Apart from the usual dual mono circuit topography, we must point out the complete absence of negative feedback, the maximum reduction in signal paths (with very little wiring, a feature which is becoming more and more highly valued by the most perfectionist of audiophiles), and the use of very sophisticated components. Among the components, the following features stand out in particular: the military-origin double-faced printed circuit boards with copper paths of up to 70 micras, the enormous toroidal feed transformer, from Hôlmgren, or the microprocessor-controlled 50-step relay volume control. In addition, the Atila is ready to take an optional MM/MC phono amp, and can receive upgrades/updates through a PC. The device's high capacity for delivery of power is clearly demonstrated by its 2 x 370 continuous wattage at 2 ohms, which means that we are talking here about electronics that can "go with" a large number of speakers.

Listening

I listened to the Scorpio-Atila combination at the "small" audition room belonging to Stradivari, the specialist Valencian establishment, using a pair of acoustic Raidho X-Monitor speakers. I think no one will be surprised when I say that the synergy created between the two brands becomes immediately obvious. The extreme neatness of both devices' design is immediately transferred to the audio realm, with delicate trebles that are not in the least aggressive and which are accompanied by extremely beautiful mids that produce near-perfect voices – the vocal registers of the seductive Sophie Milman were impeccable – and a mid-high range that is never affected by the usual roughness that occurs in this range when you are using digital sources. At the same time, the combination of the system's warmth and capacity for analysis reflects the engineering quality of Scorpio, who have managed to apply a technology which is clearly intended for

SACD to the CD format, and, particularly, for the 24 bit/192 kHz PCM of studio-quality recordings in Blu-ray format. The bass is also outstanding for its purity, a predictable virtue in a unit whose amplification electronics are well-endowed as regards reserves of power. Added to that purity is outstanding control and, particularly, extension, to such a degree that the X-Monitors grow prodigiously. Such lushness provides the added advantage of increasing the placidity of the sound while allowing reproduction of the wildest dynamic contrasts – sharp voice modulations, for instance – with all that it brings as regards transcription of the sense of rhythm and spatial perception of sound.

Conclusion

It may be that in rooms of sizeable dimensions – more than 25 square metres – and with low output speakers, the Atilla could fall short on power, but that aside, this is a set of integrated electronics which is simply magnificent. The same goes for the Scorpio, which, thanks to Gryphon’s meticulous blending of the latest technology and classic solutions, takes the sound of CDs to the highest levels of excellence. **Without doubt, an authentic “winning team” which will delight even the most demanding audiophiles.**

<u>Category</u>	<u>State of the Art</u>
Overall score	9
Value-for-money rating	9