

# salvation guaranteed

Soulnote amps are built entirely in Japan. And they are different. more puristic. more consistent. headstrong. Maybe even a little past the spirit of the times. The man who has so much courage is called Hideki Kato.



He likes to laugh and a lot. And explained do we have a translator Then It's interesting to hear Hideki Kato, Chief Sound Manager at CSR, Inc., headquartered in Kanagawa, Japan. And a fair bit away from mainstream hi-fi.

CSR was founded in 2004 by former Marantz employees. Today the company employs 50 people who produce, among other things, home audio and, with Soulnote, also high-end audio. Hideki Kato has been in the industry since the 80's and advanced in 2016 to the chief developer. And he affords himself in an industry that likes to ride the zeitgeist, the luxury of having your own opinion. Maybe this will be a little clear

if we deal with the Soulnote A-1E, an integrated amplifier specified with 80 watts at eight ohms, which is the entry-level model for the Japanese brand. And about this one

To characterize what we believe to be a beautifully made ten-kilogram amp, one should probably list everything it doesn't offer.

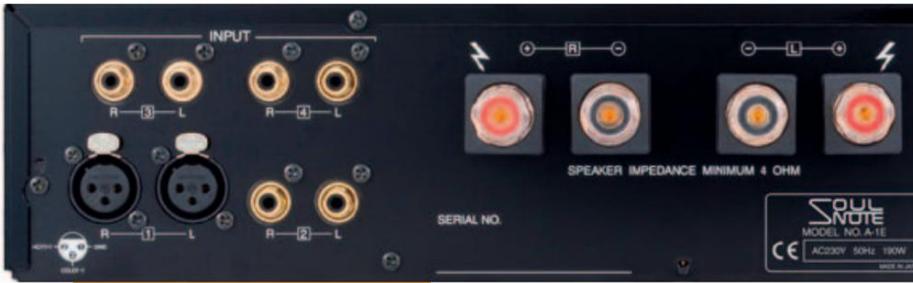
That would be about Bluetooth. or even a D/A converter. You will also look in vain for a second set of speaker terminals, the same applies to a tape output, a subwoofer output, a direct output and, oh dear, a headphone jack. And before you stop reading: A remote control

tion, on the other hand, already exists, it also manages a total of four line inputs,

one of which is symmetrical. It's no longer surprising that you also have to do without a large display, as a kind of window in the solid, finely milled aluminum front does the job. And it only shows which of the four inputs was selected plus of course the volume level. The A-1E, which at first glance appears to be quite puristic, offers inner values that one would not have expected at first. About one high

agile, symmetrical level control, which is finely adjusted with the help of a set of relays just one voltage divider made of precise resistors in the signal path.

But let's start with the case, because this is where the list of specials begins



One of the only four line inputs is balanced. There is no headphone jack on the Soulnote A-1E.



"Hard" coupling without damping and rapid dissipation of vibrations, that's the credo for the housing design of the A-1E.

Optimization of each amplifier stage. Basically similar design principles apply to the power supply, which is supposed to be "fast" and therefore does not use huge filter capacitor batteries; rather, here was a manageable

Number of smaller electrolytic capacitors with low internal resistance connected in parallel. The old "a lot helps a lot" principle is not very popular with Soulnote, which can also be seen in the rectifier sections, which rely on fast recovery types as close as possible to the transformer, and the entire selection of components shows meticulous filing at the detail.

So if you're slowly getting used to the purist features of the Soulnote, you might just need to take a look inside the Vollver stronger to throw with the Japanese

units. There is no extra damping, for example on the housing cover, on purpose. A symmetrical construction of the mechanics serves a deliberately limited "stiffness balance", the Japanese reject a completely insulated housing. Rather, the aim is to dissipate vibrations, which is why the central fastening screw of the mains transformer serves as a third, mechanically "hard" coupled housing foot; Incidentally, the entire amp stands on three hard metal feet and not, as is common, on soft plastic shoes.

There are also no cooling fins on the A-1E: Internally, massive metal coolers designed according to the chimney principle ensure heat dissipation from the A/B power stage and therefore requires a detailed

which is equipped with four bipolar output transistors per channel; According to Hideki Kato, the output transistors are selected specimens that are also precisely paired. Which, in view of another design principle of the Japanese, is no wonder, as he is concerned with optimizing the timing and thus the impulse response of an amp. This is one of the reasons,

**"All types of connectors have been eliminated for a fully contactless to create construction."**

why no negative feedback is used in Soulnote, the consistently discrete amplifier section completely dispenses with the corrective negative feedback

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to be reconciled: He is extremely meticulous and neatly built. And here you come across another special feature that seems almost anachronistic in the age of faster, cost-optimized production.

**Contactless wiring**

All contact points in the signal path and at many other points in the Circuitry, for example in the power pack, is soldered in the A-1E instead of being plugged in. This is quite complex and unusual in today's times. The manufacturer refers to star-shaped ground wiring, lower electrical resistance and long-term stability.

Incidentally, "Soulnote" is no coincidence: Hideki Kato says that the tonal catchiness of many historical components always impressed him. His amplifiers should of course be in the

With regard to objective criteria much better

sound clearer, but also show naturalness and appeal. Which, to get straight to the point, actually works and not at all

**Conclusion:** The precise, slim, always springy, exciting character of this unusual amplifier goes with a very deep, high resolution in the finest details sound image in front of a black background; Clarity, transparency and, above all, freedom from artifacts are enormous here shaped – no "superfluous" sound, no unnecessary show, mature in the best sense, combined with an enormous amount of colour, naturalness, but also impressive control and authority. And far above to settle in the price range! So if you ask us: Insider tip status and a big compliment.

**Roland Kraft**

The meticulously crafted A-1E is in the signaling pathway and other crucial Places soldered - none plug contacts.



stereoplay  
Highlight

## Soulnote A-1E

**3.600 Euro**

Distribution: IAD GmbH  
Phone: 02161 / 61 78 30  
www.soulnote.audio

Dimensions (WxHxD): 43 x 11 x 42 cm  
Weight: 10kg

**gauge charts**

T is tLab    Soulnote\_A-1\_f    08/12/22 12:47:18

**frequency responses**  
Extremely broadband, low level change when changing the impedance (0.4 dB 8 vs 2 Ω)

T is tLab    Soulnote\_A-1\_h    08/12/22 12:39:55

**Distortion analysis k2 to k5 vs. power**  
Quite powerful harmonic distortions with a dominant k2 component (0.2% 50W; 2.8% 100 W)

**practice and compatibility**

**Amplifier Compatibility Chart**  
Medium high performance but very stable. Matches well with all speakers with normal efficiency

Voltage 8y  22.0 V

frequency response  0,4 db

current 3y  6,0 A

**readings**

**Sinisleistung** (1 kHz, k = 1%)  
and 8 ŷ 61 Watt  
and 4 ŷ 95 Watt

**Music performance** (60Hz burst)  
and 8 ŷ 61 Watt  
and 4 ŷ 95 Watt

**signal-to-noise ratio**  
RCA (2 V/10 V) 99 dB  
XLR (2 V/10 V) 97 dB

**consumption**  
standby/operation 0,1/82 Watt

Readings 6	practice	value
	7	8

**stereoplay test verdict**

Sound absolutely top class 56

**overall rating** 77 points

**Price-performance** very good