

Courtesy: saxelrod92 <http://www.head-fi.org/products/vioelectric-hpa-v281/reviews/11592>

End game amp that almost nobody owns yet lol



Pros:

Powerful, multiple inputs and outputs, balanced mode, dedicated relay buttons to change sources and outputs, super black background, just works

Cons: Non in regards to sound or operation, the only issue is the large volume knob comes loose in shipping and you tighten it with supplied allen key

This review is going to be updated once I receive a balanced cable and use this amp in balanced operation. I figured this amp needed a proper review on here, and there is a lot of good stuff to say that does not require me to hear it balanced. once I do though, I will add it to here.

Edit: finally got a balanced cable, will add balanced usage impressions/review at the very end.

So I bought this amp as an end game amp that will last many years and be able to power anything I could potentially buy in the future/currently own. It needed to sound amazing, be solid state, have plenty of power for planars, and be built super tough. This amp fits that criteria better than I could have even imagined an amp would. Its built like a tank, and I really do mean that. it weighs around 13 pounds, is built out of aluminum, and every button/knob is just firmly in place (with the one exception of the very large volume knob which can come loose in shipping, but they give you an allen key to retighten the knob and then its rock solid forever after that). This amp has both balanced and single ended inputs and outputs, has pre-amp/line outputs, can have a dac put inside it, and drive 3 headphones connected to it at once without issue. The pre-gain dip switches on the back make for fantastic adjustment of volume for harder to drive headphones without inducing any kind of noise.

It can pretty much connect and power anything you can think of in regards to headphones and associated equipment.

So how does it sound? Well honestly it sounds like nothing. Sure it has smoothness, resolution, a bit of fullness, and is definitely not bright or thin, but in general this amp does not really have its own sound signature that it imparts on the sound. Its neutral and transparent in the sense that it makes audio sound unfiltered, whatever comes out of the dac is what you hear come out of the amp. It doesnt add brightness, or

warmth, no sibilance or thickness, it doesn't add or take away anything. It really is neutral in the fullest definition, with like the slightest bit of extra fullness and smoothness to the sound that ensures anything playing through it will sound its best. Otherwise it literally sounds like nothing, there is overall tone to this amp, it just sounds like whatever you're playing through it.

This is the biggest point I want to make. This amp simply works. Like it just does exactly what you want it to do. It powers every headphone regardless of sensitivity or impedance, it has a completely black background no matter what, and just easily plays whatever you feed to it. It gets out of the way and makes sound played through it, be its very best. That's why this an endgame amp to me, it doesn't even remotely make you feel like something could be missing, or done better, or differently. Everything with amp is just done in the best way it could, and in generally some of the simplest and most straightforward. With this amp you can absolutely feel confident that when you buy it, you will like the sound it makes and not have any synergy issues.

There are volume control upgrades, and such but that's only if you have the extra money to spend. It already comes standard with an amazing volume pot, two of them actually because this amp also has a balance control knob. Also inside this amp are essentially two improved V200 boards stacked on top of each other to achieve balanced operation. The V220 just has the bottom board. You literally have two 1000 dollar amps inside one chassis for less than 2000 dollars. and that has many more features.

There's tiny specifics other people may mention they hear, which is all fine, but I just want to really drive home the message that this amp will do its job, and do it with absolute precision and correctness, for a very long time, and with great ease. As of right now there are really only two other popular amps in this price range (auralic taurus mkII and schiit ragnarok). I'm sure those amps are also great, and I think they each have their own unique traits that some people may want specifically, but if you're like me and just want an end game amp that can do everything and be a master of it all, (except for powering speakers like the ragnarok) then the V281 is the best choice to go with it. I have yet to see anybody say they don't like it, and I hear why. At the very least you won't be feeling any buyer's remorse or upgraderitis if you get this amp, not until Violectric makes something better 2-4 years from now. It's just really good product.

And if you buy from the USA store you get the pleasure of dealing with Arthur. Who is the nicest guy to do business with ever. He will personally make sure everything goes well for you, and responds within a couple hours almost anytime of the day or week. He told me I was the first person in North America to own a V281, which is why I felt I should be the first to write a review on here too.

If you have any specific questions about something I did not mention, please leave a comment or PM me and I'll try to answer it as best I can.

So it has been a few months now, and I finally got a balanced cable to use with the amp. And honestly to be brief about it, this is how the amp should be used. Immediately I noticed better cohesiveness in the sound, better air and separation, overall a more rock solid detailed sound. There is also twice the output power and it's very obvious even on my harder to drive headphones. I think a better way to word this, is to look at the engineering itself. There are two whole single ended amps stacked on top of each other inside the unit. One is producing an in-phase signal, the other a 180 degree phase signal. Each amp outputs to one single ended 1/4 in. jack. So when you listen to the single ended jacks, it sounds like listening to one full single ended amp. When you listen to this balanced, it sounds exactly what you would think having two full amps combined in unison to sound like. It just sounds more whole. Again these aren't major improvements or anything, but it changes enough to definitely prefer one over the other. I think in general too going from what the other owners have said, that going balanced is the preferred connection, aside from a few specific headphones. All in all, get this amp only if you intend to use it balanced, or need both single ended and balanced connections, otherwise if you don't have balanced connections now, and don't plan on it in the near future, and want to save a few hundred bucks, just get the V220 instead. But if balanced is your thing, and having the flexibility to use any headphone, with any major connection type, then the V281 is right for you.

Also as another update in regards to how it holds up so far after a few months, the amp has been running flawlessly. There is no burn in at all as far as I can tell, there is no warm up period, there is no break in, literally aside from a little dust here and there, you would never be able to tell this has been in daily use for many months, it might as well be fresh out of the box. So still built like a tank. Also I've thrown multiple types of headphones at it, of varying impedances, and sensitivities, and no matter what the amp just runs them as if it was built specifically for that headphone. This is definitely the do it all amp. Getting anything more expensive than this, or in general anything other than this, would be purely for personal taste reasons, if you wanted a specific kind of sound from a different amp, or you like tubes :P

So that's it for now, I don't think I'll be updating this anytime soon, probably if something happens, and if not, then just some much later date to really show off the longevity of the amp.

Thank you for reading, and I hope this amp brings anyone who owns it many years of beautiful sounds :)