

# The GamuT Di150 Limited Edition Integrated Amplifier

**Compact. Powerful. Innovative.**

By Jerold O'Brien

**A**s an inveterate separates user, I sometimes wonder about the advantages of using an integrated amplifier. There are quite a few such as saving space, fewer cables, one less power cord, front end and power section designed as a unit, etc. But somehow I never got around to living with one until the GamuT Di150 popped into the stable at TONE headquarters. GamuT speakers are no stranger around these parts and are enthusiastically recommended to our readers on many occasions. Our experience has usually been that those that can design speakers can not develop electronics and vice versa. This time we were all proven wrong, happily.





### Major build quality

The use of a single NPN (negative/positive/negative) MOSFET output device per supply rail for each channel grabbed my attention instantly. According to designer Benno Baun Meldgaard, the Di150 uses large-scale industrial MOSFETs adapted to work in an audio environment and that each device is identical, eliminating crossover distortion. This and a robust power supply is how it produces 180 watts per channel at 8 ohms and 380 watts per channel at 4 ohms. This more than enough grunt to drive even the most power-hungry speakers to realistic levels. The output transistors are biased at 14 watts, to “keep them at the temperature where they run best, eliminating the need for class-A operation.”

An old habit that has stuck with me for years is to pop the top of any audio products that I encounter to inspect the power supply and the overall layout of boards and parts. The Di150 does not disappoint, revealing a super tidy dual-mono design. Two large toroid transformers weight down the front of the amp, with four large 16,000 mf capacitors in the mid-section, the input boards take up the rear and two output boards flank either side. The large heat sinks barely get warm, even during extended listening at high volume. Judged on looks alone, this amp is a winner, but it gets better when you power it up.

The amplifier itself is an elegant design featuring a single knob, controlling volume directly in the center of an acrylic insert. Four switches on either side of the insert allow for switch-

ing inputs of which there are two balanced and three single-ended. A home theater bypass switch is also included, and all functions can be selected from the supplied volume control.

### Listening impressions

As the amplifier had been sitting cold at the TONE studio after photos for nearly a week, it proved a bit constrained until powered up for a day. After a few days of background operation, serious listening would proceed. At this point, I had been streaming from my Synology NAS to the AURALiC Aires and Vega combination.

When fully up to speed, the Di150 presents a deep and wide soundstage, well beyond the speaker boundaries, making my listening room seem much larger than it is.

Moreover, the soundstage is seamless in its presentation with no emphasis on any portion of the sound spectrum. A classical selection, Smetana’s “MA Vlast” by the Saint Louis Symphony, Walter Susskind, conducting on the MoFi label aptly demonstrates this while simultaneously keeping all sections of the orchestra in perfect balance. The Telarc version of Beethoven Overtures by the Atlanta Symphony, with Yoel Levi conducting, reinforces the notion that this amplifier plays big.

Moving on to some favorite jazz selections, Will Bernard’s “Close Shave (Part)” from the album *Medicine Hat* illustrates the ease by which the Di150 can unravel all of the interactions between the musicians on this dense recording, keeping all of the rhythmic and percussive lines completely intact and easy to follow. *(continued)*

This amplifier is a champion of pace and timing. Next up, a DSD file from Jim Ferguson's album *Deep Summer Music*. The tune "What's A Guy Supposed to Do?" shows off the bassist's sense of swing while maintaining the humor of the compositional style. I loved how this amplifier captures the dynamics of the horn section without any irritating stridency, even when playing this selection a bit louder than normal.

Rounding out the listening impressions with some obligatory female vocal tracks led me to Eden Atwood's "Day by Day," from her album *This is Always*. Ms. Atwood's voice stays locked front and center, never wavering, with no trace of shrillness or bloat, emerging from the black background naturally. Next up, Cecile McLorin Salvant's "I Didn't Know What Time It Was" from the album *Woman Child*. The texture and timbre of her voice is beautifully rendered while the piano and bass provide a solid, propulsive thrust; neither invading on each other's sonic space. Female vocal box ticked.

Turning to analog, first up was the new pressing of Duke Ellington's *Blues In Orbit*, courtesy of Analog Productions. On "C Jam Blues" The Di 150 again proves expansive, with multiple horns easily discernable. Whether it was the trombone, trumpet, violin or clarinet, the reproduction was utterly natural and engaging - impressive! The final test of dynamic capability came again from Analog Produc-

tions; *Power of the Orchestra*, featuring two Mussorgsky compositions and offering up the classic "Night On Bald Mountain," with its enormous dynamic swings. Again, the Di 150 handles it with ease and is almost scary at how it instantly goes from idle to full power.

#### Great for an extended date

After living with this amplifier for almost a month, I grew to truly appreciate its various capabilities. It rarely broke a sweat even under heavy dynamic conditions; it always stayed true to the music, and it never lost its primary character of presenting a large and seamless sound stage with nary an emphasis on any portion of the sound spectrum. It was always calm, cool and collected.

While not inexpensive the Di150's \$12,999 MSRP is not out of line compared with other products capable of such performance levels. My current reference amp and preamp retail for \$12K and while the Di150 sounds different in overall character, it merely presents a different flavor from what I'm used to. And that is a flavor that could grow on me pretty quickly.

For a music lover looking to save space or is simply looking for a final electronics purchase that will serve admirably over the long term, then I'd look no further than this amplifier. It offers superb performance, excellent build quality, innovative electronic design and ease of use. Highly recommended.



## Additional Listening by Jeff Dorgay

As Mr. O'Brien mentions at the beginning of this review, it's rare that a designer has the moxie, the insight or the chops to build speakers and electronics. But GamuT's Benno Baun Meldgaard is a bright guy, who happens to be a major music lover of all kinds. The older I get, the more intriguing a fantastic integrated becomes. I love my job, but I do get tired of chasing the cables. And speaking of cables, GamuT includes an IsoTek power cord that's probably worth a thousand bucks if you bought it separately. While some might complain about the relatively simple remote, I'll take a mega power cord and inexpensive remote over the alternative any day of the week. One more thing not to buy!

Until the last few years, the integrated amplifier has been somewhat of a red-headed stepchild, but no more, with many great choices. I love the Di150 for many reasons, but most of all for the sound quality and nearly 200 watts per channel of power. Unless you are going to drop six figures on separate components or you just have to have tubes (and I won't call you a bad Smurf if you do), the Di150 is all you ever need for a world class system. I've heard the Di150 powering the \$150k/pair GamuT flagship Zodiac speakers with no lack of excitement.

Of course, I had excellent luck in my system with my pair of GamuT RS5i speakers. This is a breathtaking combination, and as Mr. O'Brien has hinted, this is a similar topology to the single-ended Class-A designs from Nelson Pass. Not the same, but enough to be recognizable. There are precious few solid state designs that tube lovers find enamoring, but the Di150 won over all of my glowing bottle buddies with the coherence it presents. *(continued)*





No matter what the program, the Di150 plays music with a total lack of “electronic” feel. It just is, and that’s a tough trick to pull off.

Synergistic as the Di150 is with GamuT speakers, it was a dream with the Quad 2812s. These speakers are soundstage demons that feel like a giant pair of headphones in listening room two. I doubt that I ever pushed the Di150 out of class-A mode and I’m sure that contributed to the magic. Paired with the Audio Research REF Phono 3 and the Gryphon Kalliope DAC brought parity to analog and digital sources. Even though both of these components exceeded the cost of the Di150, again, it was not embarrassed in the least.

For those wanting elegant simplicity, but still need to rock when required, this is the amplifier for you. And that’s why it’s TONEAudio’s Amplifier of the Year. ●

**GamuT Di150 Limited Edition Amplifier**  
**\$12,999**

**MANUFACTURER**  
 GamuT

**CONTACT**  
[www.gamutaudio.com](http://www.gamutaudio.com) (factory)

**PERIPHERALS**

- Speakers** Ryan R-630
- Preamp** Modwright SWL 9.0 Anniversary Edition
- Amp** Modwright KWA-150SE
- Phono Stage** Manley Chinook
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- Cartridge** Van den Hul Frog
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