

# hi-fi news

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## & Record Review

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**REVIEWS**  
SEPARATES,  
VINTAGE  
& MUSIC

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# ULTIMATE HI-FI 2017

The year's finest products  
and essential music

### Equipment

65+ standout  
separates tested

### Vintage

Audio icons  
of yesteryear

### Music

The best Vinyl,  
CDs & downloads

### Opinion

Our columnists'  
hi-fi high points

• **VINYL/PHONO PREAMPS** DS Audio to VPI • **TRANSISTOR & TUBE AMPS** Audio Research to Quad  
• **CD/SACD/NETWORK PLAYERS** Kalista to T+A • **USB DAC/HEADPHONE AMPS** Arcam to Rupert Neve  
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Integrated CD player/streamer/DAC/amplifier. Rated at 500W/4ohm  
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 Price: £11,695

AUDIO  
FILE



# AVM Ovation CS 8.2

**A**vailable in the UK via PMC, the £11,695 Ovation CS 8.2 is the German company's flagship all-in-one digital audio system. The design incorporates a rated 500W/4ohm of Class D power amplification, sourced from Pascal A/S in Denmark, with a valve line stage of AVM's own design using proprietary tubes.

For all its complexity and capability, the layout of the Ovation CS 8.2 appears relatively simple, its front panel kept clear by the use of five 'soft keys' below the display, which change their function according to the mode in use. An aluminium-cased RC 3 handset is

is accommodated via the usual stub antenna for Wi-Fi, and an Ethernet port. As well as UPnP streaming, the Ovation CS 8.2 can also access streaming services, including Qobuz and Tidal, plus Internet radio.

The asynchronous USB input offers a choice of 'Lo Res' and 'Hi Res' modes, which you'll need for files up to 384kHz/24-bit and DSD 128. You can play these at their native sample rate or by up- or down-sampling, as well as via two filter settings. One analogue line input is available, on a choice of balanced XLRs or conventional RCAs, and for external amplification there are both XLR preouts and a choice between fixed or variable RCA outs.

Using the CS 8.2 can be as simple or as detailed as you want, as it's possible to dig deeper into the menus

and adjust parameters for both the analogue and digital inputs, and the internal CD player and FM tuner.

Tone, balance and loudness controls are also available in the menu, complete with bypass, and a split mode where the pre and power sections are accessed separately for incorporation into more traditional hi-fi systems.



## TOTALLY CAPTIVATING

AVM says it aims for maximum musical enjoyment without a sense of everything being 'hurled' at you. Yet you soon realise that there's

no shortage of detail, definition, soundstaging, imaging and all that other hi-fi stuff, while the music also has a wonderful feeling of flow and involvement, making it hard not to be totally captivated.

With a warm recording like the LSO String Ensemble's reading of the Vaughan Williams *Tallis Fantasia* [LSO Live] the CS 8.2 manages to combine a level flow of the music with a convincing view of the finer details. String textures were particularly vibrant and had no shortage of rhythmic vitality.

And if you decide to pump up the likes of Gov't Mule's 'Shine On You Crazy Diamond' [*Dark Side Of The Mule*; Provogue] to anything near realistic gig levels, you'll find AVM's amplification keeps its cool. Well, actually it runs quite warm, helped by that valve line stage, but it does prove capable of making speakers shift lots of air while delivering glorious instrumental sounds. Each note of the guitar solo crunched with the electromagnetic bite of string and pick-up, while the rest of the band pounded out the rhythm lines as the crowd roared, yelling and whistling.

Play Valentina Lisitsa's glorious set of piano works by Philip Glass [Decca] and there's both admirable scale to the instrument and fine rhythmic drive in those tight, fast repeating figures. Few players reproduce the sound in as organic a manner as is delivered here.

## VERDICT

The sound of the CS 8.2 is hugely satisfying, deceptively easy to enjoy and above all entirely musical. Throw in the flexibility on offer, the build and style, and this is a really rather special product. ☺

**ABOVE:** Bold, chromed rotaries govern input selection and (digital) volume while a row of buttons allows menu items to be navigated via the display above. The slot drive is for CDs only

'The guitar solo crunched with the electromagnetic bite of string and pick-up'

supplied and AVM offers an app for Android and iOS that runs on a smartphone or tablet.

The dominant controls are the source selector and the volume knob, while a power/standby button and aperture for the slot-loading CD transport complete the fascia. Internally the layout is largely modular, for ease of servicing and to facilitate plug-and-go upgrades to key circuit areas. Rear digital inputs are provided on USB-B, two optical and one coaxial socket, plus a USB-A port for the connection of storage devices, while networking

## HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Continuous power (<1% THD, 8/4ohm)	245W / 460W
Dynamic power (<1% THD, 8/4/2/1ohm)	240W / 470W / 870W / 405W
Output impedance (20Hz–20kHz)	0.013–0.195ohm (45ohm, pre)
Freq. resp. (20Hz–20kHz/100kHz)	+0.0 to –3.1dB/–27dB (Analogue)
Digital jitter (S/PDIF at 48kHz/96kHz)	20psec / 12psec
A-wtd S/N ratio (re. 0dBW/0dBfs)	80.7dB (Analogue) / 106.1dB (Dig)
Distortion (20Hz–20kHz; 0dBW/0dBfs)	0.005–0.084%/0.012–0.065%
Power consumption (idle/rated o/p)	34W / 560W (3W standby)
Dimensions (WHD) / Weight	430x130x355mm / 12kg