



It Ate All!

The IN100se, an integrated stereo amplifier from Atoll Electronique must have taken more than half a decade to hit the Indian shores, but it is certainly worth the wait. Here's why.

Now here's an audio manufacturer I've never had a chance to get down-and-dirty with — Atoll Electronique, a decade-old company started by two French brothers who set out to do the impossible: high-end audio electronics for budget-conscious audiophiles (isn't that an oxymoron?) What we received seemed to beam with just that mission statement especially when all you've done so far is glance at it.

OUT OF THE BOX

Atoll's IN100se is a stereo integrated amplifier and like many out there, its charm lies in its aesthetic simplicity. Finished in what looks like a thick black metal coating and possessing just three buttons on its front panel, the IN100se is one of the most minimal stereo amps we've received till date. The volume knob sits at the centre next to which is a headphone port. The right side consists of three buttons laid out in cross formation with the power button and two

input selection buttons on the three points of the cross and the infrared receiving eye on the fourth. An arc consisting of little LEDs that light up upon the specified input selection sits beside the cross. On the far left, Atoll felt that it was enough to simply place their logo in that wide space, which they were correct about. You can get the IN100se with a black or a silver front plate, depending on the finish of the rest of your entertainment products.

TECHNOLOGY

Atoll has stuck to many of their initial line of products they had released upon the company's own inception, one of them being the IN50 amplifier. Needless to say, they kept doing their fair share of upgrades to the product through the years, which is why the IN100se which came out in 2001 now has the 'se' (of 'second edition') attached to its model name.

As far as specifications go, the IN100se can slam your speakers with 100W of power per channel at 8 ohms and a 140W at 4

SPECIFICATIONS

POWER OUTPUT 100W Per Channel @ 8Ω; 140W Per Channel @ 4Ω
TOTAL HARMONIC DISTORTION (THD) <0.05%
FREQUENCY RESPONSE 5Hz-100kHz
SIGNAL-TO-NOISE RATIO (SNR) 100dB
DAMPING FACTOR NA
DIMENSIONS (H x W x D) 4" x 17" x 10"
WEIGHT 10.8kg
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ohms. That's quite a lot of power considering the 65k price-tag it comes with. Most other amplifiers in this range barely hit 80W. In fact, Atoll warns their buyers about powering any speakers with an impedance of less than 4 ohms from fear of permanently damaging the drivers due to an excess of power. And that's not all, with a signal-to-noise rate of 100dB, you're getting a wide bandwidth of dynamics which will do wonders to the soft segments of an orchestral piece. Its internal architecture featuring a fully symmetric design with discrete





components for maximum internal noise, further enhance the audiophile characteristics of the IN100se. The output stage features a MOS-FET* transistor, keeping the performance of the amplifier to its level best while lowering the overall cost of the amplifier.

As far as connectivity goes, you're given your essential inputs via four pair of RCA ports along with a pair for pre-out, bypass and tape in/out. Banana connectors have been provided for speaker terminals and a power switch at the furthest right corner.

ATOLL ELECTRONIQUE

MODEL >> IN100se
 CATEGORY >> INTEGRATED STEREO AMPLIFIER
 PRICE >> Rs 65,000
 WARRANTY >> 1 YEAR

AESTHETICS

★★★★★

BUILD

★★★★★

AUDIO

★★★★★

EASE OF USE

★★★★★

VFM

★★★★★

WHAT SAY AV?

Complete with the warmth of a tube amplifier, the power of pre/power dual mono blocks and a price tag that can make you drool, the IN100se amplifier by Atoll is a winner on all counts! Its aesthetics have been underplayed. Nevertheless, what the IN100se offers is undeniably one of the greater experiences we've had in our studio.

AV MAX
 OVERALL SCORE



REMOTE CONTROL

It is an elaborate controller and is designed not just to control the IN100se but all of the products that Atoll builds. The Tuner section is way on top, followed by the CD/DVD and finally the amplifier section. So you're looking at a lot more buttons than you're used to on other stereo amplifiers. It would've been great if Atoll would make smaller, specified remotes for just the stereo amplifiers because they really don't need more than five buttons for volume, input selection and power on/off. Its response is far from unsatisfactory and it did whatever was asked of it.

PERFORMANCE

We had the Atoll first connected to a pair of Dali Helicon 300 MK2 bookshelves that we had tested on other amplifiers before this. The pair had a tremendous soundstage and imaging thanks to the ribbon and soft-dome tweeters it possessed, however, it was a little slow in delivering the low frequencies which were otherwise rich in detail. Dropping in Coldplay's 'Rush Of Blood To The Head' and skipping over to "Politik", we immediately plunged into the absolute power of the IN100se!

This amplifier can deliver power with utmost authority like not too many amps out there, because it does this without letting you hear its own sonic colour with the music. They stayed isolated from the soundstage, giving you the warmth of a turntable while maintaining a transparency amongst the highs. With even heavier tracks like "God Put A Smile On Your Face" the clarity amongst the instruments was crystal, and you can hear everyone in the band given their space in the soundstage. There have been several amplifiers where the distortion of the guitars and the banging drums was reduced to a blur of audio confusion while the energy of the track dropped exponentially. With the IN100se's power, the energy was increased to a tremendous level, keeping my ears interested in this English band.

With something more rhythm

oriented like Michael Jackson's "Dangerous", the slowness in the bass came through. You could hear the amplifier doing its very best to keep the kick and the bassline of tracks like "Jam" and "Can't Let Her Get Away" as snappy as Michael wanted it, but the speakers were just not doing it justice. We handed the cables over to a pair of Xavian MIA bookshelves, and the tracks got the juice they needed. And with the added bass accuracy, you can't help but keep your feet tapping to the beat.

A great CD to check for imaging is Kailash Kher's 'Kailasa Chaandan Mein' that showcases the versatility of this man's flawless voice. He remained at dead centre throughout the album, letting the instruments and backing vocals take care of the space around him. The timbre of his voice was as tasty as a meatball sandwich and you could hear his entire throat vibrating to the force of his vocal chords. Most of all, in this entrancing experience, I managed to completely forget where the speakers were as all that existed for the 30 minutes that I was listening to the album was a three dimensional projection of pure music.

CONCLUSION

Stereo amplifiers that can bring you a musical performance like the IN100se can be counted on the fingers of a one-handed man. It is truly a rare occurrence to see an amplifier bringing so much to the table as far as power, clarity, soundstaging and imaging go at such a price range. You can tell that Atoll has downplayed the aesthetics of this monster by keeping everything subtle. This is great for audiophiles but this price range also caters to the upper segment of the middle-class and they need a fair bit of frills on their audio products. We could find nothing else worth mentioning as far as negatives go, and even the one mentioned in the previous statement now seems negligible. Just forget I said it, because, man, this guy can deliver! 🍌

Karan Gour



* WHAT IS...

MOS-FET

MOS-FET or metal-oxide semiconductor field-effect transistor is an amplification device found in most amplifiers now-a-days. There are p-type and n-type MOSFETs, where p- and n-stand for positive and negative atoms that are added to a semiconductor to increase the number of free charge carriers (positive or negative). It took the place in the popularity charts of the bipolar junction transistor thanks to its easy integration and low costs.