

Big and Beautiful

Longdog Audio's new P6 monoblocks have power aplenty and a sound that is truly seductive. Jon Myles explains all.

Longdog Audio may not be a household name in hi-fi circles but it's fair to say company founder Nick Gorham knows a good deal about building quality

audio equipment.

Based in the Yorkshire town of Halifax (or rural Halifax as their website has it), Longdog has designed and manufactured a wide range of products over the

years – from high-end single-ended valve amplifiers to power supplies for Naim streamers and also a Reference phono stage for Music First.

Now Nick has turned his



monoblock amplifiers and, as ever, come up with something a little different in the shape of the LDA P6.

Why different? Well, instead of using multiple output devices to get the claimed 200 Watts per channel Nick has employed a single pair of Mosfets originally developed for the power transmission industry and available in complementary pairs.

There's one catch, though; they're very hard to drive. So the P6 employs a smaller power amplifier to achieve this. In effect each one of the pair of output devices in each monoblock is itself driven by a smaller push-pull amplifier constructed by using a single pair of smaller output devices. Each half of the output stage is itself driven by a push-pull amplifier. So it's Push (driven by push-pull) and Pull (driven by push-pull) - the six Ps giving the amplifier its name.

That output needs a big power supply so Nick has fitted a big mains transformer into each case. It measures a substantial 180mm x 460mm x 410mm (HxVxD) and each weighs in at a hefty 20kgs.

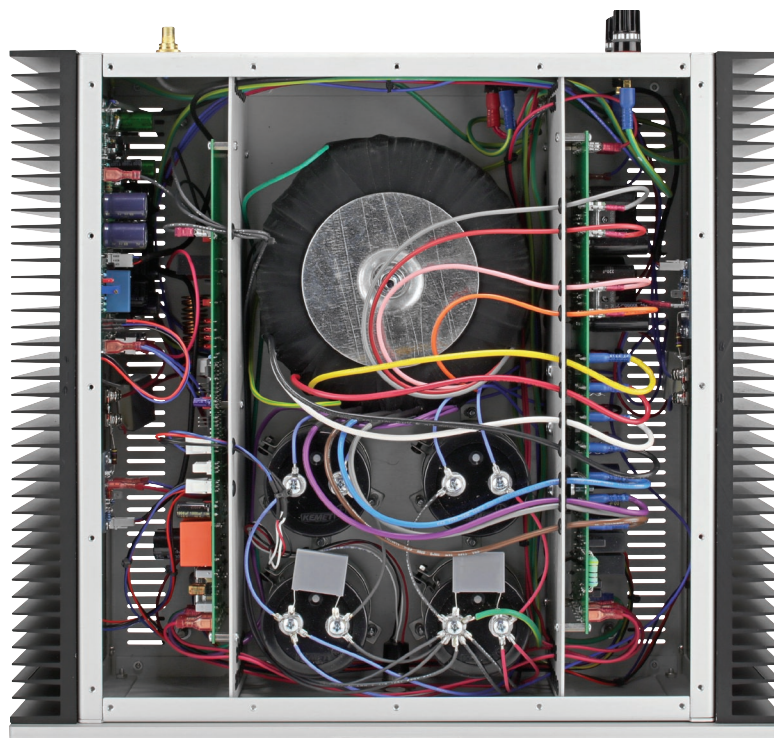
There's substantial heatsinking on each side because the Longdogs are biased into Class A for their first 20 Watts of output. On the rear there's a single RCA input alongside a pair of 'speaker binding posts and the IEC power input. Apart from the on/off switch on the front that's it - the Longdogs are big, fuss-free and definitely purposeful-looking.

However, the size and weight meant they wouldn't fit onto a standard hi-fi rack meaning floor placement was necessary with longer-than-average interconnects needed. No big problem but worth bearing in mind.

SOUND QUALITY

With a Music First Audio Classic V2 pressed into service for pre-amplifier duties the Longdogs instantly came across as fast and nimble.

Powerful they may be, but that



The Longdog monoblocks employ a large toroidal transformer to power the output section of the amplifier, as well as the smaller push-pull sections.

Class A bias gives them an open, spacious sound. There's no sense of time smear or grain in the music - simply a broad, detailed soundstage which projects well into the room.

Through a pair of Quadral Aurum Rodan 9s (see review this issue) the cymbal on The Dave Brubeck Quartet's 'Take Five' sounded vibrantly realistic.

“Unlike some powerful monoblock amplifiers which tend to throw the music at you the Longdogs have a more relaxed nature that puts me in mind of valves”

Moreover the whole band was laid out before me - each instrument occupying an exact space in the overall sonic picture.

The Longdogs also sound positively rhythmic with excellent timing. New Order's 'Bizarre Love Triangle' through a pair of Sonus faber Olympica Is had thundering bass with real low-end power but devoid of overhang so the track zipped by. The sound of Gillian

Gilbert's electronics was also pristine. I could hear every note, every studio trick and the full range of the instruments.

Moving on to Messiaen's 'Quartet For The End Of Time' (24/96) there was strong midband clarity; clarinet had a superb, natural tonality whilst piano notes were strikingly rich and resonant.

Unlike some powerful monoblock amplifiers which tend to throw the music at you the Longdogs have a more relaxed nature that puts me in mind of valves. On the gloriously flowing 'Somewhere Down The Crazy River' by Robbie Robertson there was no transistor edge apparent - just a truly enthralling presentation that brought out Robbie's gruff vocals while allowing the gentle



Loudspeaker binding posts, a single RCA input plus an IEC mains input take up the back of the LDA P6. Simple - but effective. There is no balanced XLR input.

NOEL SAYS -

Money, people and power. They go together – even in audio. A true audiophile amplifier is (should be) built upon audiophile components: resistors, capacitors, low leakage mains transformers and what have you. They cost money, often big money: £20 for a Jensen paper-in-oil that I like to use, instead of 20p for a bulk-purchased everyday part for example. Part cost is multiplied by successive mark-ups, typically by a factor of five. So a £20 capacitor adds £100 to retail price (on which £20 of VAT is added by the Government).

Now the ‘people’ part. Designer Nick Gorham is a true hard-core audiophile, as well as a skilled engineer. I speak to him regularly at Shows; he even looks the part, with long silver hair and beard! He uses quality parts and audiophile techniques, in addition to brewing up sophisticated circuits: the P6 produced so little distortion it was a shock.

And then there’s ‘power’. Not Class D but good old dependable Class A that doesn’t syringe the ears – and plenty of it in the P6.

The P6 then is both a specialised and purist design, explaining its size, cost and complexity. Also its relaxed but thunderous sound. **NK**

instrumentation behind to slide along. I wouldn’t say they sound as rich as valves but they certainly sound organic in the same way.

The Longdogs will also go shatteringly loud without a sweat. With Massive Attack’s ‘Unfinished Sympathy’ bass and vocals stayed firm and steady no matter how high I turned up volume – the only limit seems to be what the ‘speakers (or ears!) can tolerate.

In fact, the longer I listened to these monoblocks the more impressed I became. They work

with all sorts of music: heavy rock, chamber, opera, orchestral and all genres in-between, with a total ease of delivery.

Admittedly, £7500 for a pair of large monoblocks won’t suit everyone’s budget but I’d prefer to look at it a different way. They are so sweet sounding and well-built that you might never have to consider another upgrade in

the amplification department and instead simply build your ancillaries around them - improving source, loudspeakers and pre-amp as time goes by.

CONCLUSION

The Longdog Audio LDA SP6s are a class act. Powerful yet refined and beguiling to listen to. Plug them in, sit back and enjoy.

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

Power output of a Longdog P6 measured 130 Watts into 8 Ohms and 250 Watts into 4 Ohms (0.1% distortion limit), so it is both powerful and able to double its power when load is halved, something few amplifiers can manage due to power supply current limitation. This ability suggests it will have powerful bass, as bass current is not curtailed by power supply droop.

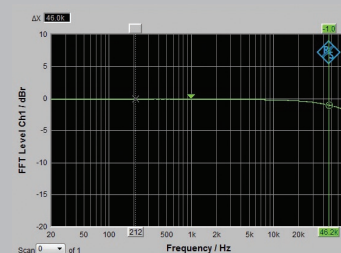
Into 4 Ohms frequency response extended flat to 46kHz and into 8 Ohms a little higher, likely due to an output stability (Zobel) network that most amplifiers have. At the other end of the spectrum output measured flat down to 3Hz. So the P6 covers the audio band smoothly and will sound tonally balanced.

Distortion levels were low, with no rise at high frequencies – important and impressive. At 1 Watt output the figure was 0.01% at 1kHz and 10kHz – the same at full output too. This is both a very low distortion design and one without changing high frequency harmonic patterns that the ear detects.

Input sensitivity was a conventional 1V and noise low at -115dB.

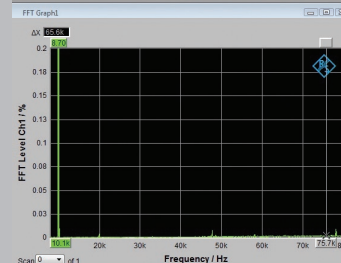
The Longdog Audio P6 is powerful, unusually well regulated and of supremely low distortion at all output levels and frequencies. It has an excellent measured performance. **NK**

FREQUENCY RESPONSE



DISTORTION

| THD at d | Level RMS | Frequency |
|----------|-----------|------------|
| ch1 | 0.0113 % | 2.4837 V |
| ch2 | OFF | 10.000 kHz |
| ch3 | OFF | OFF |



| | |
|------------------------------|-----------|
| Power (8 Ohms) | 130W |
| Frequency response (-1dB) | 3Hz-46kHz |
| Distortion (10k, 1W, 4 Ohms) | 0.01% |
| Sensitivity | 1.3V |
| Noise | -115dB |
| Damping factor | 35 |

LONGDOG AUDIO P6 £7500



OUTSTANDING - amongst the best

VERDICT

Refined, detailed and powerful. The Longdog P6s are a joy to listen to and set a new benchmark at the price.

FOR

- power
- biased into Class A
- massive soundstage
- deep bass
- open and revealing

AGAINST

- not small

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