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Inspirational entry-level Krell

Krell
KAV-400xi
Integrated amplifier
£2700

★★★★★

FOR

Loads of power,
detail refinement;
good build

AGAINST

Quality isn't cheap

VERDICT

An accomplished
all-rounder that'll
work well in a wide
range of systems

THIS IS AN entry-level amplifier, but only in Krell terms. The company could quite easily sell you a pre/power combination costing as much as a new Mercedes – so just how much of a Krell is this new slimline integrated amp?

It delivers a lot more Krell qualities than the price might suggest. There's no hint of corner-cutting in the build: the KAV 400xi is as solid and skilfully finished as other products from this brand. And there's little obvious compromise in power output, too: it delivers 200w into 8 ohms and doubles that as impedance halves. The KAV 400xi will drive just about any speaker to high levels without drawing breath.

But don't mistake this Krell for a muscle-bound thug. Musically, this is one of the most rounded amplifiers we've come

across in recent years. Past Krell efforts could be a little mechanical-sounding and edgy, but this is neither: it's smooth, refined and delivers midrange with body and warmth. It works beautifully with the simply recorded duets of *Ella and Louis* (Fitzgerald/Armstrong). The easy rhythmic flow and unforced dynamics benefit from the Krell's transparency.

LEADING RIVALS

Sugden Masterclass integrated

£3150 ★★★★★ June 2002

Low power, but produces a sound of impressive authority and refinement

Pathos Logos

£2495 ★★★★★ November 2004

Distinctive looks might not be to your taste, but what a sound!

But don't worry, there's plenty of attack when the music demands, too, as a spin of Nirvana's *Nevermind* proves. Excellent low-frequency performance is something of a Krell tradition, and the KAV 400xi doesn't disappoint. There's plenty of authority, but it's the speed and subtlety that'll impress. The result is that Massive Attack charge at full throttle, while the double bass on Miles Davis's *Kind of Blue* lacks nothing in harmonic richness or definition.

A high feature count isn't typical for an amp of this type, so this integrated's four line-level inputs and single tape loop are par for the course, with balanced input and an AV processor input for the power amp useful additional features.

The KAV-400xi is a great product, and it deserves a place high on any shortlist.