

SUMMARY

PROS

- Excellent sound quality
- High quality build

CONS

- Crossover may be tricky for some users

FEATURES

- 2 x 130W
- 440W bridged
- RCA inputs only
- Sensitivity (gain) control, wide scale of 7 to 0.2V
- 20 to 200 Hz active crossover frequency controls
- Channel-dedicated low-pass and high-pass selection controls
- Power terminals for stiffening cap
- Power terminals for cooling fan
- Four external power fuses

ALSO AVAILABLE

Xtant 502a

£549

Classy looks and sounds from this top performing amplifier. Smooth mirror finish lid with the terminals visible along one edge. Also has a built-in cooling fan that provides better than average heat removal.

Phoenix Gold Tantrum 300.2

£349

If you don't have enough money for a DLS amp, Phoenix Gold has a lot to offer with its Tantrum range of amps. The 300.2 is rated at 2 x 75W and is a great all rounder, with all sorts of accessories available.

VERDICT

Excellent sound and some serious power. Some users may consider the features a bit on the basic side, but it depends what you're after. If your purchase is based on amazing performance, good bass and a quality looking product, then this could well be the amp to go for.



# Ultimate Strength

TYPE	Two-channel amplifier
PRICE	£650
CONTACT	Millennium Audio 020 8866 6468
WEBSITE	www.dls.se

Reviewer: Ben Duncan



## Best known for its speakers and subwoofers, DLS has just launched a high end range of amps.

If you've heard of DLS before, it's probably because it's a Swedish brand well known for producing some excellent speakers and subwoofers. A couple of years back, DLS released the award-winning X12 subwoofer, a 12 inch monster costing around £500 and capable of producing some truly amazing bass. The brand also makes amplifiers, and more recent times have seen the launch of an all-new high end amp series, the Ultimate range.

There are currently six amplifiers making up this series. If you're after a two-channel model, as well as the A3 shown here, there's the A1 model, rated at 2 x 150W and costing £349, the A2 rated at 2 x 200W or bridgeable to 1 x 500W and costing £449, and the A5 rated at 2 x 300W, bridgeable to 1 x 700W and costing £650. In addition, there's the four-channel A4, rated at 4 x 100W for £820, and DLS has just released a sub amp too, the A6, which is rated at 1 x 1200W with a £550 price.

This A3 two-channel forms part of the series and like these other Ultimate amps contains a number of special 'audiophile-quality' electronic parts for higher sound quality. It also has terminals for connecting a stiffening cap and a cooling fan, as required. Looking at the power delivery available, the cooling fan could well be necessary if you drive this amp at all hard, particularly if in bridge mode.

The amp looks quite conventional with a slightly curved top, half of it fins and half of it smooth. All controls and connections are situated along one edge. The control features are relatively straightforward. Other than the RCA (phono) socket inputs

and level control, there are separate buttons to engage the high and low-pass channels. These are dedicated to the individual (left/right or front/rear) channels. There are also separate frequency setting controls, with identical ranges of 20 to 200 Hz.

On the test bench, the amp's frequency response showed an unusually extended low end. The crossover's response was also rather unusual. At low frequencies it seemed fairly even, but at higher settings the level reduced.

Background noise was nicely low. Noise levels from the power supply section were between average and a tad high, but in listening the amp was quiet enough.

The stereo and bridge power delivery are pretty high and definitely satisfying for the amp's size. But the 440W will require some serious current from your battery — we recorded a peak level of 65A. So be sure to get the full performance by using thick enough power cable and a good solid chassis connection.

In action, the A3 showed that it was very capable with a broad range of material, with excellent performance at all times. It demonstrated a smooth and broad representation in the bass end, with expert grip and definition on pretty much any track you care to use it with. High levels of definition were evident in the mid-range, complemented by a clean and very crisp top end. CDs used in testing included *Café del Mar*, *Xen Cuts* and *Red Hot Chili Peppers* — all varied forms of material, yet each presented so well. ■