

CE PRODUCTS

FIELD TEST NEW PRODUCTS

AudioControl Amplifier Can Do It All BY ROBERT ARCHER



AudioControl's Avalon G4 amplifier is rated to produce 230 watts into 8 ohms and 300 watts into 4 ohms regardless of operating as a two-, three- or four-channel amplifier.

I 'VE BEEN WRITING ABOUT AudioControl for around 20 years and have learned much about its high-performance consumer and professional audio products that leverage the Washington-based company's proprietary designs.

The company's tradeshow demos have always been impressive, but admittedly they never completely spoke to me, likely due to the choice of content. Having the opportunity to try AudioControl's Avalon G4 four-channel amplifier in my own home, however, has me singing a different tune.

I tested the multichannel amp in a stereo system and as a subwoofer amplifier and I couldn't have come away more impressed with its versatility and the high level of quality it brought to each application.

FEATURES & SETUP

Out of the box, it may surprise some that considering the amp uses AudioControl's Class H design topology, the amp is heavy.

The company lists the Avalon G4 as weighing 38 pounds, in a chassis that's just 17 x 16.5 x 3.5 inches (W x D x H).

Regarding the Class H implementation, AudioControl says the cool-running technology helps to increase the amplifier's efficiency and reliability.

Additionally, the amp employs the company's Light Drive Anti-Clipping Protection Circuitry to eliminate the potential for damaging speakers in the event the Avalon G4 is cranked up to a point where it is clipping.

The 2U-high component's rear panel provides both XLR (balanced) and RCA (single-ended) inputs; four sets of multi-way binding posts; channel-level trim controls; stereo/mono option buttons; and 12-volt trigger.

From a power standpoint, the Avalon G4 is rated to deliver 230 watts into 8 ohms; 300 watts into 4 ohms; and 600 watts bridged into an 8-ohm load.

During my time with the amp I used it to drive a pair of Triad 10-inch, 4-ohm passive

SPECS

AudioControl Avalon G4 Amplifier

- ▶ Four-channel amp features the company's proprietary design topology
- ▶ Rated to produce 230 watts into 8 ohms, 300 watts into 4 ohms
- ▶ Includes AudioControl's Light-Drive anti-clipping circuit protection
- ▶ Rear panel offers XLR (balanced) and RCA (single-ended) inputs
- ▶ Incorporates five-way binding posts
- ▶ Remote 12-volt trigger for control

▶ MSRP is \$1,960
audiocontrol.com

subwoofers, and in a stereo system with an NAD C 658 streaming player/preamp and pair of Aerial Acoustics Model 6 speakers, and later a pair of Sonus faber Sonetto III loudspeakers.

Setup in each configuration took a matter of minutes.

As a subwoofer amp I simply took an RCA subwoofer cable from my Onkyo A/V receiver and split the LFE signal using a "Y" cable to channels one and two of the Avalon G4. In both setups I maximized the trim on the back of the amplifier and selected "RCA" on the channels' RCA/XLR switch.

In the stereo system with the NAD C 658, I selected the XLR option and connected the amp to the NAD preamp using AudioQuest XLR cables.

Lastly, I'll point out I selected "mono" operation for the subs and "stereo" operation when I connected it to the NAD preamp.



The Avalon G4 includes XLR and RCA inputs, four sets of binding posts, 12-volt trigger and more.

PERFORMANCE & CONCLUSIONS

The initial configuration I used the amp was in a home theater to power the subwoofers. From my 4K Apple TV I played several movie trailers, including *Avengers: Endgame*.

I was impressed right away with the amp's abilities. The Avalon G4's power rating is the same as the amp it replaced in my system and I thought the Avalon G4 delivered greater power, weight and control over the drivers to help the subs produce more-defined low frequencies.

Watching movies such as *Geostorm* from the HBO Now service confirmed what I'd been hearing with the movie trailers. The subs sounded lively, tight and impactful, aided by the amp's control over the drivers.

What I like about this setup is the Avalon G4 is driving both subwoofer enclosures without sacrificing quality. It also emphasizes that amp ratings can be deceiving; amplifier "A" may have the same rating as amplifier "B," but rating methods aren't standardized so you need to trust the manufacturer is specifying continuous power and not "peak" levels.

Moving on to the stereo setup, my initial listening did include the Aerials, but most of the evaluation was done with the Sonus faber speakers. I simply couldn't help it — the combination of the AudioControl amp, NAD preamp and Sonus faber Sonetto III speakers produced stellar results.

Along with using streaming audio services, much of the source content came from my Thorens TD-160 turntable connected to the NAD's moving magnet phono inputs (the Thorens has a Rega RB300 tonearm and AudioTechnica 440ML phono cartridge).

This also afforded me the opportunity to compare the streaming version of AC/DC's *Back in Black* from Amazon, via the

NAD preamp's built-in BluOS whole-house audio platform, to a vinyl version. I thought the system helped delineate the differences between the formats nicely.

Using BluOS the stream offered nice layers to allow me to hear rhythm and lead guitar parts, bass lines, vocal melodies and drums within the sound stage. The vinyl version was warmer, fuller and "rounder" sounding.

[The Avalon G4] sounds great with stereo music; it delivers decisive power as a subwoofer amp.

Other content on vinyl such as Steely Dan's *Greatest Hits (1972-1978)* with the amp driving the Sonetto IIIs really highlighted the amplifier's clean, transparent power. I never thought the amp was running out of gas, compressing or struggling to drive the 4-ohm Italian speakers. Every instrument on "Do It Again" sat well within the mix to allow me to hear a tremolo type of effect on the song's keyboard/organ parts that adds to its hypnotic rhythm section.

The NAD preamp and AudioControl amp also captured the nuanced dynamics on songs such as "Reeling in the Years" and "Old School," while also being able to render impactful thump from the kick drum in the opening of "Bodhisattva."

After spinning Michael Jackson's *Thriller*, I can add the Avalon G4 completely rocked this classic pop record. The amp and the rest of the system tremendously captured the sound of this early 1980s production that incorporates lots of digital reverb, which was used vigorously on the drums and vocals.

At one point my teen daughter ran downstairs to sit next to me while I was playing "Billie Jean" at SPL levels that were probably over 95dB. She agreed with me how great the groove of the doubled bass line sounded. Regarding the reverb, my daughter, who plays musical instruments, even remarked how she could hear it in Jackson's vocals.

I'll add that she's like any other teenager whose listening is mostly done in her room, via Apple Music and headphones. The fact that she came down and sat through the record speaks to the quality of the amplifier and other components' ability to capture and maintain her attention.

It's hard not to be impressed with the Avalon G4. It sounds great with stereo music, it delivers decisive power as a subwoofer amp and because it can configure in multiple ways it takes those qualities to support whole-house audio and home theater applications too. If dealers could only carry a single amplifier, the Avalon G4 would be an ideal one. 🎧

CE PRO VERDICT

AudioControl Avalon G4

PROS: Excels in just about any usage scenario; delivers plenty of power to drive a range of speakers; provides high value as subwoofer amp

CONS: To those unfamiliar with AudioControl product line — don't be fooled into thinking it's a lightweight switching type of amplifier; has heft and should be secured into furniture or equipment rack