

Parasound P 6 & A 23+ Review

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Test: Parasound P 6 and A 23+: Pre / power amplifier combination with ingenious features

Parasound - For some old hands, just the mention of this brand name makes their eyes glisten: These were the American components with the monstrous price / performance ratio back in the nineties! Powerful amplifiers for rack installation, with THX and great performance. Absolutely. There was a time in Germany when these Americans, led by their genius developer John Curl, had an impressive lead, at least in the AV area. Then US companies were curiously less available in Germany. But that is changing again: While their multi-channel components have been sold by MediacraftAG in Frankfurt for a long time, the stereo components have recently resided at Input Audio. Its boss Bernd Hömke has an excellent nose for sniffing out audiophile products again and again over many years and they have proven it again with the new Parasound - as our test of the P 6 and A 23+ pre-amplifier combination shows. This San Francisco, California company has been owned by Richard Schram since 1981. Development takes place in San Francisco, frequently in cooperation with audio legend John Curl, and is manufactured in Taiwan.

A preview of our conclusions

The fact that the Parasound P 6 is not just any run-of-the-mill preamplifier is evident by its designation. "2.1 Channel Preamplifier & DAC" is what Parasound calls its newest progeny, referring not only to its built-in D / A converter, but also its extensive subwoofer options. Even when you look at the back side of these two products, you will quickly realize that someone knew exactly which functions and connections make sense and are enjoyable to use and which are creature comforts also improving sound. The breadth of ingenious details is virtually unmatched. Let's take a closer look at that.

Parasound P 6: Well thought-out audiophile gear

In addition to balanced inputs and outputs for stereo, the Parasound P 6 also has a subwoofer output (more on that later). Below it are the phono stage jacks and controls, with adjustable load impedance and gain for moving coil and MM cartridges. The P 6 also offers Record-Out tape jacks for recording onto other analog devices. Anyone who wants to "blend" their stereo system and surround system will be pleased by the unique facility to loop the L, R and sub channels directly from the Surround processor or receiver directly to the L, R and dual Sub output jacks, bypassing the volume and tone controls. When the P 6 is switched off, the bypass is still available with RCA connectors. If you bypass with its balanced XLR jack, you have to turn on the P 6 and select the Bypass input as you would any other source.

In my opinion, subwoofer connections are still too scarce in the stereo world. Parasound implements this feature consistently in an exemplary manner. As is so often the case, there is not just a simple sum output for the subwoofer, but an XLR balanced output and two RCA jack unbalanced outputs. There is also an analog (!) active crossover with continuously adjustable filters for bass and treble. Each adjusts continuously from 20 to 140 Hertz with a phase-correct 12dB / octave. In addition, the high pass and low pass controls can be switched on and off independently.

The preamplifier also includes a D/A converter and inputs include USB 2.0, and RCA coaxial jack and two optical Toslink inputs. As is customary today, the latter processes up to 24 bits with a 192 kilohertz sampling rate. The USB accepts up to 32 bit and 384 kHz as well as various DSD formats. Last, but not least, there are two mini-jack sockets, one with 12V trigger voltage for automatically switching on a power amplifier. The other

12V jack accommodates an external IR remote control repeaters. The front panel is equipped with a gold-plated mini jack for headphone listening and an auxiliary analog input for mobile devices. In addition to the switchable tone controls, there is even a front panel level control for the subwoofer.

The digital display shows the setting of the analog volume control. The illuminated display can be dimmed in two steps. The blue glow around the buttons was the inspiration for naming this series "HALO." A picky gripe: the blue glow of the numeric display is very slightly different than the blue glow around the buttons.

Unfortunately, too few stereo remote controls have illuminated buttons. This remote control, however, features the "HALO blue" to back-light the control buttons. The layout of the remote control is well organized and thought out. Always appreciated are separate buttons for On and Off. And with this remote, a reference volume level can be saved in the P 6 memory, so the volume level you selected is what you hear whenever it is turned on.

Parasound A 23+: Versatile features rather than the bare minimum

Parasound has also provided the A 23+ with well thought-out connections that enable audio benefits and convenience. The power can be switched on either manually or, as is usual with subwoofers, simply awakened from standby by an incoming music signal. Its sensitivity can be conveniently regulated over a wide range. Of course there is also a 12-volt trigger connection available, always happy to pass its signal to other components.

The A 23+ has it all: RCA-XLR inputs, loop-through output jacks, a switch for bridged operation and large, insulated speaker terminals. Connectors and terminals with high-quality 24k gold-plating. Incoming audio signals can also be looped out to drive additional amplifiers. The A 23+ accepts either balanced or unbalanced signals and offers infinitely variable sensitivity independent gain control for each channel. The Parasound power amplifier can also provide twice the output power in mono bridge mode. All audio connections are high quality gold-plated.

How the Parasound pair performed

Continuous output power up to 210 watts per channel at 8 ohms is specified by the manufacturer with both channels driven simultaneously and peak current up to two times 45 amps all looks impressive when you look under the hood. In its bridge mode the A 23+ delivers up to 600 watts into 8 ohms! That is enough for long-lasting high SPL orgies and driving very low efficiency loudspeakers. The classic Class A / B construction is dominated by an enormous toroid power supply transformer. Separate thermal sensors on the cooling fins provide additional protection for the circuitry and parts. The main ventilation airway is protected with bars.

In addition, there is an integrated subwoofer control. After a listening session with the Heco Celan GT 902 floor-standing speaker, I converted to the smaller Celan GT 302 plus Celan GT Sub 322A. Both filtered at 80 Hertz and the phase adjusted, we could start. How can I say this? It just sounded a class better: more airy at the top end, more supple in the middle range; plus active bass with greater control and authority, easily reproduced bass that was an entire octave lower. The manifestation of another plea for the use of subwoofers equally applies in the stereo arena. And before someone claims that the difference in sound could be due to the fact that the A 23+ power amplifier was weak on the floor standing speakers: Not at all, on the contrary, the Celan 902 had rarely shown such a tight and controlled bass.

Conclusion: Superb sound and construction

If you pair the Parasound P 6 and Parasound A 23+, the comparison with a “Swiss Army Knife” quickly comes to mind: exemplary workmanship and always the right control ready for every special purpose. The A 23+ sounds great, with endless power and tight control. With continuously adjustable input sensitivity, the balanced and RCA inputs, the loop-through option and the switchable bridge operation, the output stage can be used for practically any configuration. Even the option of simply waking them up automatically with music is awesome. In terms of capability, however, the P 6 flips the bird at the competition. Here, too, there are naturally balanced and unbalanced connections - in and out. The loop-through option for surround signals, an adjustable

phono input and the D / A converter with USB, RCA and Toslink are all welcome. The illuminated remote control and programmable turn on volume and turn-on volume are also welcome. Rather unusual is the now-rare tape output for recording with analog tape machines etc. The real smash hit is the comprehensive active analog crossover for subwoofer control, with thoughtful adjustments. The most important attribute, however, is this: the Parasound P 6 and Parasound A 23+ play together in a pleasingly balanced and precise manner, while still musical with tonality that tends toward warmth. The consistently very supple reproduction and simultaneously true-to-size presentation and pin-point positioning of individual instruments and voices is amazing. Yes, this is how HiFi is fun.

BEWERTUNGEN

KLANG	★★★★★
PRAXIS	★★★★★
VERARBEITUNG	★★★★★
GESAMT	★★★★★

Die Bewertung bezieht sich immer auf die jeweilige Preisklasse.

PARASOUND A 23+ 2020/10



LowBeats **4,5**
ERGBNIS

ÜBERRAGEND

BEWERTUNGEN **P6**

KLANG	★★★★★
PRAXIS	★★★★★
VERARBEITUNG	★★★★★
GESAMT	★★★★★



LowBeats **4,5**
ERGBNIS