

Full Freedom

With the fully brewable 8-channel A35.8 stage, Primare offers unimaginable freedom of choice. We chose to test it with the best preamp and also the signal source: PRE35 Prisma.

Text Jonas Bryngelsson Image Primary Measurement H&M

Prhymes were started for over 30 years when in Copenhagen by **Bo Christensen**, but has for many years been a Swedish, first Växjö- number Mal mö / Limhamn-based company. Although internationally as it suggests, with the Danish manager's designer in **Bent Nielsen**, who has actually been on the whole trip; the managing director **Siemen Algra** from the Netherlands and finally an American sales manager in the **Terry Medal** (the latter two, with a long history with the distributors in the Benelux and the USA respectively). And a Swede who contributed to the company moving to class D reinforcement, but more on that and him later. And to take the safe before the uncertain, we may continue to refer to Primare as a Scandinavian wise company...

It's hard to miss a Primare product for something else, with the now classic, dual fronts, which actually not only make up a sleek design, but also protect sensitive audio circuits from disturbing elements from display and control electronics. A form of shielding, in other words, with aesthetic bonus points. The three feet have been followed by many, but the question is whether Primare was not first?

Otherwise, one is also known for an earth

close and reality-based approach to product development and products.

Such a decisive step was when one saw gradually began to transition to Class D technology.

Primare did this already in 2007 with the two integrated models CD- and DVDi10, where they realized both the advantages and disadvantages of the class D technology of the time.

To move on, they found **Patrick Boström** and his ingeniously named company Anaview. Patrick already had a patented technology, as well as developed and manufactured his own class D modules (which we wrote about and tested in H&M).

Primare licensed Patrick's patent and, in close collaboration with him, developed a Class D module, which would later be called the UFPD, and which was introduced in 2008 with SPA22 - a combined multi-channel amplifier and processor.

Later, Patrick sold Anaview and started Power Bricks, with new patented ideas that led to Primare's new Class D modules UFPD 2 2017, which is the platform that still applies today.

Patrick Boström is currently development manager at ICEpower.

This was a pretty long and snarky one



way to get to today's main number **A35.8**, which *does not* use UFPD or UFPD 2 modules...

There are several reasons why you have chosen not to work with your own UFPD 2 modules, which are located in the 2x200-watt stage A35.2. First, they wanted to create a flexible multi-channel step that can be used in a number of different ways, in both strict 2- and large multi-channel systems, and only the imagination sets limits to the configuration possibilities. A given example is bi-amped or bridged front speakers in a 5.1 set-up: 2 + 2 + 2 + 1 + 1 = 8.

In brewed mode, Primare believes that the sound from A35.8 is so close to A35.2 with its own UFPD 2 modules, that you can easily let the latter handle the stereo speakers in a multi-channel system and let three brewed channels from the former manage center and surround, and two unbridged channels for the height speakers.

It also points out the basic similarities between the own modules, Hypex nCore and Purifi Eigentakt (both with **Bruno Purzeys** as author), where the nCore module and UFPD both work with 300 megahertz switching frequency; UFPD 2 and Eigentakt with 500 megahertz.





More channels simply take up more space and cost more money, while at the same time wanting to offer us consumers a product in a reasonably affordable price range. It would probably have been possible to squeeze 8 channels of UFPD modules into the amplifier, but to scale down the size of them and produce a more complex and larger power supply, would simply have turned white too expensive.

Instead, eight bridges have been chosen, only nCore 500 modules from Dutch Hypex.

These are complete amplification modules, but Primare not only adds a solid, own 1,500 watt strong power supply, but has also worked a lot with the modules themselves, not least cooling but also shortening the signal paths.

The Hypex cards are mounted in pairs, together with an ingeniously designed cooling profile. By removing the usual cooling from the Hypex card, it has also been possible to shorten the signal path considerably, while the design of the "stereo module" gives maximum cooling effect to the two amplifier cards. Which can also be replaced very easily.

Yes, it's a lot of work to get everything as good and efficient as possible, all signed chief designer Bent Nielsen.

The power supply is also the switching and is the largest that Primare has ever designed, of their own APFC type - *Auto Power-Factor Correction* - in this new version 5% more efficient than previous versions. To the advantages of the APFC network part, mention is made of reduced interference with other components and something called *transition mode*, which minimizes switching losses and thus increases the overall efficiency.

But I actually think it's high time to stop talking about everything around and instead offer some listening examples, which hardly surprisingly became quite a few, given how many ways the A35.8

can be connected, even in a pure stereo setup...

2 channels, unbridged vs. Burmester 956 mk2

With only two of eight channels activated, the A35.8 is actually also tonally really close to the 956, strangely enough, considering the price and design differences. Both feel tight, but Primare possibly even more so, but above all a little calmer in character and a little more restrained upwards in frequency. I do not want to say dazzled, because it could also be that Burmester spice up the cymbals a little too much on the title track of the recently re-released "Out of the Gray" with Dream Syndicate.

2x2 bridged channels vs. 2 channels unbridged

It is always with a certain mixture of horror and charm that you listen to a brewed connection, as it often sounds worse than unbridged, even when the designer who has put in the effort here does it in the best possible way.

Tonally it is very similar, of course, but in terms of character, the unbridled connection is a little more plump, or rounder to the character, one might say, but above all calmer to the temperament. Bridged, it will clearly be more push, sledgehammer and power in the pieces, a more physical representation but also more nurturingly engaging. Which in a more negative wording could be described as more forced, even if Primare is far from falling into the bridge-coupled trap with a hard and less compliant rendering.

No, the music is played tighter, more powerful and faster, but if you are more cozy, the unobtrusive mode may be enough. It should also be added that in the brewed position, the amplifier suddenly encounters a halved speaker load. An 8-ohm speaker is seen as a 4-ohm speaker and one

4-ohm speakers should therefore be very careful when operating in the brewed position, as the practical impedance ends up at a low 2 ohms.

The speakers we mainly tested with, were large but fairly easy-to-drive Perlisten S7t, with specified 4-ohm impedance...

2x2 bridged channels vs. 2x2 + 2x2 channels bridged and bi-ampat

There will be a difference here, at least! Not entirely unexpectedly, it gets better in every way, when the amplifier's all eight channels are allowed to power the speakers both brewed and bi-amp. Calmer, safer and more controlled and detailed, but at the same time more musically complete in every way. It will be a different bottom, but perhaps above all a larger and more airy sound image, on all levels and also with a rather insignificant rock-studio recording, also in demo version, from the mid / late 80s... worst variety, in other words!

But it is and has probably always been one of Primare's foremost stick horses, to just play and make the best of even completely ordinary and inconspicuous music and recordings that do not directly hold audiophile class.

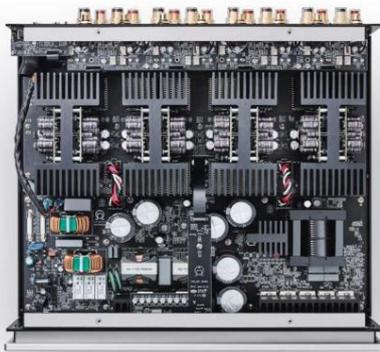
2x2 channels brewed vs. bi-ampat (total 4 channels)

Finally, the 10,000 kronor question: if you "only" have to use four of eight channels, will it be better brewed or bi-amped? A (re) connection that takes some time to make, but where I probably still think that the bi-amp music (*Wish You Were Here*, 24/96) is played more separately, clearly detailed but also with a little better speed and drive. It plays cleaner, clearer and more musically unforced, I think. But it is clear, given the nominal 4-ohm impedance of the Perlisten speakers, the result is not surprising.

TEST! **Hifi** Primare A35.8 / PRE35 Prisma



A neat and easy-to-navigate back, where you can use the rockers to select connection with XLR or RCA, and 0 or + 6dB in brewed position. If 0 dB is selected, the output level of a bridged channel pair will be the same as for a single channel (so actually the mode is -6 dB) and if you select +6 dB, the output signal will be 6 dB stronger (0 dB actually). Very flexible if, for example, you want to mix bridged and solitary channels to bi-amp a speaker. Also note the rocker that activates auto-on.



Note it basically straight through the SMD-mount and cable-free layout, with extremely short signal paths. The four amplifier pairs of current are put in pairs through the two twisted cable trunks, from the separate APFC mains part at the bottom of the picture. The four amplifier modules can be easily lifted out and replaced should any of them break. Extremely short signal paths by direct connection to copper paths on the circuit board.

The test version of the PRE35 pre-stage has a built-in Prisma unit, in addition to all kinds of digital and analog inputs and outputs. It struck me that Primare's tireless Terry Medalen before the test of the new mk2 version of the small network bridge NP5 (see H&M no. 1-2 / 2022), reminded me that no matter how good it is, it *does not* perform at the same level as Primare's larger units, where the Prisma module coexists with amplifiers of various kinds.

And it just does not get bigger and better at low level than the big first stage PRE35. Reason? The power supply. NP5 comes with a small simple 5-volt DC bulb. To be compared with a large, linear power supply and a variety of, individually adapted, small discrete power supplies exactly where they are needed in PRE35 Price ma.

Said and done, NP5 mk2 was connected to digital input 10 on PRE35 (electric coax

A fully loaded PRE35 with both DAC and Prisma cards, the latter at the top right of the car; the former next to the left. The 8-channel AKM-DAC chip just above the four yellow capacitors

Everything you could possibly need and a little more, such as dual antennas, LAN both in and out, but above all dual pre out via XLR connectors.



The inside of a completely analog PRE35, without both DAC and Prisma cards. In principle, consistently surface-mounted also here (SMD). Note the R-core transformer in the lower left corner of the image, which Technics was early to use, with even lower electromagnetic radiation than a ring-core transformer.



ial) and got to take over the music playback of *Have A Cigar* from the same 3rd party program (MConnect).

Of course I was prepared for a difference and *Have A Cigar* in particular has a calm and sucking pace, but really this slow it should not go anyway? was the spontaneous reaction when the little extra box took over the play. As already mentioned, with exactly the same music from the exact same music service (Qobuz) and the exact same playback program (MConnect). To the exact same D / A converter and on through the rest of the preamp to the balanced output contacts.

In addition to an extra cable between the bridge and the front step, the only difference is the power supply to the Prisma unit, which is also *exactly the same*.

A switch back to playback entirely via PRE35 and its Prisma device, also gave the hand a tighter playback of the music and more obviously present details. More detail to say the least, except that the music felt subjectively so much more vital and that it was played faster (which of course it does not...).

There is no major doubt that the final stage A35.8 is the main claw of this test, but I still want to point out that PRE35 Prisma worked very well during the test. It has a variety of setting options, such as adjusting the input sensitivity to even out the levels, but also dual balanced XLR both inputs and outputs, which clearly facilitated testing a lot.

Finally, I can state that Primare has succeeded very well in its intentions to take ÿ