

FWD112_Primare_Allt-i-Ett

A box full of surprises

All-rounder. That's how you could translate the Swedish word "allt-i-ett." It seems like a perfect name for the latest Primare. With 300W of power, a dozen drivers, HDMI-ARC, a phono input, and tons of streaming options, the Primare Allt-i-Ett is indeed something truly versatile. And thanks to BACCH 3D, it also offers something truly unique.

Jamie Biesemans

Primare Allt-i-Ett

2,990 euros www.primare.net and www.pai-audiovideo.nl

5 stars – 9 online

- Too high to place in front of a TV on a stand
- Only available in a dark wood finish
- Waiting for Roon Ready certification

- + Ready for a turntable
- + BACCH function provides extra spaciousness
- + Room calibration plus tone controls
- + Successful design
- + Room-filling and immersive
- + Warmer sound with rich midrange detail

Numerous reviews of Primare have already appeared in FWD Magazine/Music Emotion, ranging from the minimalist I15 components to the combination of the high-end SP25 surround processor and A35.8 output stage. All are conventional hi-fi devices – although the I15s are naturally somewhat more compact than usual. This was a deliberate choice, as these devices are intended to make "hi-fi" interior-friendly. The Allt-i-Ett reviewed here, however, is something completely different. However, the emphasis is again on blending harmoniously into a living room.

The unusual name, which rolls off the tongue smoothly after a little practice, is more than a subtle hint; Allt-i-Ett is Swedish for "all-in-one." Indeed, for the first time, Primare is building a single device that marries an incredible amount of functionality with amplification and built-in speakers. Calling it a soundbar would be unfair, because like, say, Naim's MuSo or the Canvas, the Allt-i-Ett is more of a complete music system, including streaming and DAB radio. Coincidentally, it does have HDMI-eARC so it can also handle tv-sound. But that's not necessarily its primary application. You can also place it on a sideboard with a turntable. The Allt-i-Ett retails for €2,990. It's a considerable sum, especially if you're starting your search for a soundbar. Although these days you can also find soundbars in this higher segment from brands like KEF, Sennheiser, and Yamaha. According to the designers of the Malmö-based company, this device should be seen more as an alternative to a complete music system with separate components and speakers. From a hi-fi enthusiast's perspective, that might seem like a bold claim. But Primare believes it can overcome the traditional shortcomings of speakers combined in a single box compared to two separate hi-fi speakers with its innovative BACCH 3D algorithm. Developed at Princeton University, it eliminates crosstalk to sharpen three-dimensional imaging.

Although our own BACCH devices are quite expensive, we've already experienced superb BACCH performance on speakers from Dutch & Dutch and with the Canvas HiFi system. So the presence of BACCH on this Primare is certainly appealing.

And then there's the Allt-i-Ett's design. One element that definitely stands out is the motorized

screen, which can stand upright or disappear flat into the housing. This isn't the only design feature that's quite special about this all-rounder from Malmö.

A design object with a large volume knob

Design is simply in Primare's DNA. And has been for a long time; just Google the Series 200 from the 1990s. Their current products (like the aforementioned PRE35) also use elements like a floating front panel and large round knobs to distinguish themselves from average hi-fi components.

It's no surprise, then, that the Allt-i-Ett is far from an anonymous bar, but aims to be a true design object. That's clever, because that position, just below a TV screen, is simply very conspicuous. You look at it constantly.

When switched off, the Allt-i-Ett has a deceptively understated air. Simply placed on a piece of furniture in the room, it looks little more than a large box. Only up close do you notice that the front is fabric, while two-thirds of the top is made of dark wood. The grille can be removed, revealing two tweeters at the edges, sandwiched between two midrange drivers and two woofers. To further enhance bass performance, two woofers are located at the bottom and two at the rear. All of this is powered by 300W of amplification.

At the top center, you'll find a strip that combines numerous controls, including a massive volume knob. It's subtly done: the knob is nestled in a wide recess, making it easy to grip. It's also surrounded by a luminous circle, making it easy to find, even in a darkened room. Not the only light emitted by the Allt-i-Ett, though; a glow radiates from the bottom of the front panel. You can dim or switch off the lights using the remote or the app, which is handy when watching TV in a darkened living room.

One screen is not enough

Just above the volume knob, you'll find the first of two screens. This one is touch-sensitive and is used to select an input or a preset. Several touch buttons surround the volume knob, including one that displays a range of settings on the screen. And then there's the second screen, which can be tilted thanks to a motor. You control this with the up and down buttons on the remote. You can position the display virtually anywhere from flat to almost upright, allowing you to see the album art and information about the track being played while streaming music. If you adjust the volume briefly using the slim remote, a circle with the volume level will also appear briefly on this display. With physical sources, you'll see this volume indicator continuously, as there's no meta information. This screen can also be turned off if desired.

When described like this, the Allt-i-Ett might seem rather complex and technical. But when we looked at it from the sofa, parked on a low AV cabinet next to a 65-inch LG TV on the wall, that wasn't how it appeared at all. It is a relatively tall system, so it wouldn't be a good fit for a television on a stand.

Lots of streaming inside and outside the app

Controlling the Allt-i-Ett is done almost entirely via the device's two screens. You might not use it often when standing by the TV, but as a music system on a cabinet, reaching for that large volume knob is perfectly natural. If you prefer to stay on the couch, you have two options: the included remote and the Prisma Audio app. The remote is a classic Primare product, with a clear layout and the option to illuminate the buttons. This is handy when watching or listening late at night in a dimly lit living room.

The simple Primare Audio app lets you control almost every aspect of the Allt-i-Ett. For example, you can switch the physical inputs, for example, to select the phono input. Another clever feature is that you can enable autosense on a specific input. The Allt-i-Ett will then automatically turn on or switch to that input when you, for example, play a disc on a

connected CD player.

The app also gives you access to streaming options. Primarily, you can play your own music files from USB or a NAS via UPnP. Recent app updates have added a lot of functionality, including built-in internet radio and a number of streaming services. Qobuz and Tidal are now directly integrated, but Qobuz Connect and Tidal Connect also allow you to control the Primare directly within their apps. The same is possible with Spotify. There are also streaming options outside of the app: AirPlay, Bluetooth (including aptX HD), Chromecast, and – coming soon – Roon.

You can adjust some settings on the Allt-i-Ett. These are done via the device's landscape screen, but most settings can be adjusted through the app. This includes everything from audio-related settings (such as an equalizer or controls for integrating a subwoofer) to disabling inputs when not in use. Settings and sometimes music are presented in a rather spartan way, especially on a larger tablet screen, but everything is clear.

Adapts completely

The app also provides access to more advanced settings. The most important is RoomEQ, a room calibration feature that ensures the Allt-i-Ett sounds optimal in your room. This is not superfluous, because the shape and furnishings of a room significantly influence the sound. It's an extreme example, but consider how a heavily tiled bathroom can sound very harsh. A living room rarely affects the sound as much as such a tiled environment, but especially regarding bass, there can be a negative interaction in a typical living room. A bass note that drowns out speech while watching a movie, for example. The influence of the room can also reduce a stereo image or affect the sense of spaciousness. In short, using RoomEQ certainly seems worthwhile – and that was also my experience during testing.

RoomEQ isn't that difficult. First, you take a measurement with the included wireless Zen microphone, using the Allt-i-Ett to emit pink noise while you walk around the room with a microphone. You don't need to be precise; just keep the microphone pointed at the device and stay at least 1.5 meters away. After a maximum of 60 seconds, the Allt-i-Ett calculates the room's acoustic properties and suggests a custom target curve. This adjusts the sound to ensure a balanced output.

Now the question remains: which microphone do you use? You can simply use the microphone in your iPhone or iPad. But it's better to use the Zen Microphone that comes in the box, which also works with Android devices. If you prefer to manually adjust the sound instead of relying on a calibration function, there's also an 11-band equalizer in the app.

Record player and more welcome

The designers of the Allt-i-Ett clearly realized that a music system at this level truly needs to offer everything. This is reflected not only in the many built-in streaming options, but also in the connectivity section. This certainly exceeds what a soundbar would offer—but surprisingly, also quite a few classic hi-fi amplifiers. In addition to an HDMI eARC connection, which you use to use the Allt-i-Ett for tv-sound, there's a phono input (compatible with moving magnet cartridges found on most turntables), two optical inputs, a coaxial input, and a USB port. So you can connect quite a few sources, although most Allt-i-Etts will likely be connected to a turntable and television at most.

As is the tradition for Primare, there are two Ethernet ports, in addition to the built-in Wi-Fi. This is quite convenient, as you can run a network cable to the Allt-i-Ett and then use the second port to send internet to, for example, your television. The sub-output also allows you to connect an external subwoofer. A positive feature is the presence of trigger connections, which allow you to activate a CD player or phono preamp when you turn on the Primare. This saves you from having to fiddle with remote controls or searching for hard-to-reach on/off buttons.

Presets make radio listening easy

The fact that the Allt-i-Ett includes an FM/DAB radio makes it an exception among all-in-one devices. You also have the option of playing internet radio via the Prisma app, but if you prefer, you can listen to local stations completely offline. However, you do need to mount the antenna on the back, which you can skip if you don't plan on using the radio tuner.

Six presets on the flat-screen display make calling up a radio station a simple matter of pressing a button. You can also link these presets to an internet radio station or Spotify.

A full performance

The Allt-i-Ett we received before its formal retail launch was completely finished, except for the software. At the start of testing in October, that part was still being extensively tweaked. The BACCH section, for example, initially didn't work because the algorithm still needed to be refined for the Allt-i-Ett. Primare assured us that the sound quality was impeccable. Critical listening was done with RoomEQ enabled, which yielded a significant improvement in clarity, bass tightness, and soundstage depth in our living room. Without it, the Allt-i-Ett sounded a bit dark and flat.

Speaking of bass control, the Primare delivered the opening track "My Old Ways " on the new Tame Impala with a tight, substantial delivery. The vocals were also excellent; Kevin Parker's voice sounded clear and separate from the underlying thumping beat. The bass notes were also correctly delivered on "Dracula," with its disco rhythm, with a surprising amount of definition for a device like this. This also helped to enhance the impact of watching TV. Adding a subwoofer isn't necessary unless you really want to feel your classic timpani or electronic rhythms (or action scenes in science fiction films) as well as hear them.

Overall, the music came out well from the Allt-i-Ett, completely eliminating the impression of a single source. That's, of course, the problem with speakers like the Sonos Five and similar speakers: they essentially sound like mono speakers. That's not the case here, which is understandable given the more complex speaker architecture. Tame Impala's pop tracks, of course, have a mastering more typical of a mainstream production, so they're not always entirely airy. Nevertheless, the Allt-i-Ett extracts everything, resulting in a more nuanced presentation.

Time for BACCH

And then the BACCH function appeared, allowing us to continue testing with a final version of the Allt-i-Ett. A positive development, because although this algorithm operates subtly, it does introduce a spaciousness that you immediately pick up, especially during more critical listening. Even with 'The Astounding Eyes of Rita', a spacious-sounding jazz album with a masterful contribution from oud player Anouar Brahem – just to be clear: 'oud' as in the North African string instrument, not as an indication of age. On this album, you'll find songs that sound very Eastern, but also possess jazz textures, a fascinating combination. On the eponymous eight-minute track, I could really taste the delicate metallic textures of the oud strings. The BACCH function helped with this, by presenting the music separately from the front of the Allt-i-Ett, making it appear much grander. The musicians were much more present in the room than before. The beauty of this is that there was no artificiality in the tonality, as you often experience when using a Dolby Surround upmixer, for example. BACCH doesn't deliver a similar surround simulation this time either; that's not the intention. The saxophone used in 'The Astounding For example, 'Eyes of Rita', which plays more in the distance, still sounded very smooth and full in the middle.

The effect of the feature depends heavily on the track. In the first three movements of Mozart's Horn Concerto No. 2 in E-Flat Major, in the LSO's excellent version provided via Qobuz Connect, enabling BACCH marginally improved the integration of the horns into the

larger whole. This is, of course, an excellent recording by nature, where you want to enjoy the warm character of the brass, so the horns' somewhat central role without BACCH was perfectly fine.

In Sofia Portanet's German-language pop, I noticed a significant improvement with BACCH. Her 'Menschen And "Mächte"' truly evokes the eighties and new wave, with a guitar chased through a handful of effects like phaser and delay. With BACCH, we once again experienced a much more open sound, and the guitar line, in particular, sounded better defined and fuller. The added value of this feature was thus proven, giving the Allt-i-Ett a leg up on its few similar rivals.

And what about the TV? Episode 8 of the second Severance season is largely set in a desolate winter landscape, filmed in Newfoundland, Canada. With BACCH enabled, small atmospheric effects were better defined, creating an almost surround-like experience in some scenes. A car driving through a half-ruined town conveyed its motion realistically, and the melancholic music was presented almost overwhelmingly. Dialogue clarity was also excellent, especially after performing the RoomEQ test. There's no real dialogue lift option; this isn't a real soundbar, after all. However, with the equalizer in the app, you can make voices more prominent if desired.

Looking purely at the Allt-i-Ett as a tv-sound solution, the device naturally performs differently than a typical high-end soundbar. It doesn't deliver thundering bass, nor does it attempt to recreate surround sound. It does, however, deliver a full-range sound that's accurate from low to high, which works particularly well with series that use music intensively to set the mood. The Allt-i-Ett also creates a wide soundstage, making the action appear larger than the screen. This resulted in an immersive viewing experience not only with 'Severance,' but also with action sequences like 'Tron: Ares,' where Nine Inch Nails's powerful industrial soundtrack boomed powerfully from the Primare. Even the bombastic orchestral sounds that marked the finale of 'MI: Final "Reckoning"' support had a mass often lacking in a traditional soundbar, while the rapid movements during the chase were conveyed by the biplane. The bass extension of the Allt-i-Ett is impressive; I might consider adding a subwoofer for a longer listening session. It's not an absolute must, but it's not too difficult to add either.

Spinning discs

Including a phono input was a smart move by Primare. On the long AV cabinet in the living room, it made perfect sense to park a Pro-Ject The Classic next to the Allt-i-Ett. With its retro look, walnut finish, and floating sub-chassis, I thought it was a perfect partner for the Primare. A classical album deserves a pairing, and Leonard Cohen's "Greatest Hits" disc is definitely one of those. "The Partisan," a personal favorite, flowed richly from the Allt-i-Ett, with excellent stereo separation. A fine result, and "Gold Junkies" on Melanie De Biasio's "Lilies" also appeared with a tight, full beat, on which the vocals of Carolo—a resident of Charleroi, fun fact for the next pub quiz—floated high in the air. This is a great example of a track that, on the Allt-i-Ett with BACCH, immerses you even more, just like "Let Me Love You." The understated "Lilies," which follows the rousing "Gold Junkies," is quite a tonal difference, yet wonderfully atmospheric. A positive experience nonetheless, and it's nice to see that the phono input and its accompanying amplifier received sufficient attention, so this device can truly present vinyl properly.

Conclusion

The Allt-i-Ett boasts so much functionality that you could safely call it the ultimate all-in-one system. We can't think of a single feature it's missing; it's all there. The combination of all the streaming features, the extensive connectivity (including HDMI-eARC and phono input), and the sleek design make for a truly compelling system. Just as importantly, it's also a standout sonically. Once you set RoomEQ and enable BACCH, this Primare delivers a listening

experience unlike any other soundbar or similar system. It excels at music, but it also scores highly with tv-sound.

Tech Specs

What: All-in-one system with built-in speakers

Drivers: 6 woofers, 2 midrange drivers, 2 waveguide tweeters

Streaming: Primare Audio app, AirPlay 2, Bluetooth (SBC, AAC, aptX, aptX-HD), Chromecast, Qobuz Connect, Spotify Connect, Tidal Connect

Entrances: HDMI-eARC, cinch/MM phono input, 2 x optical, coaxial, USB

Outputs: sub output, headphone output

Extras: app control, dual touchscreen, room calibration, BACCH 3D Sound

Dimensions: 69 x 30.3 x 15 cm

Weight: 16 kg