

# SUPERTEST Amplifiers

## Orell SA-040SE

typically £399

Construction ★ ★ ★ ★ ☆

Facilities ★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆

Sound quality ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Value for money ★ ★ ★ ★ ☆



Clean, open sound on both CD and vinyl



Slugged CD input can deaden the sound



**Orell SA-040SE:** what it lacks in facilities this true minimalist amp more than makes up for in sound quality

Another purist design from a fairly new company, the Orell SA-040SE offers just the basics. It has a 60watts per channel output (both channels driven at 8ohms) and inputs for phono (switchable mm/mc sensitivity), tuner, CD and two tapes.

No balance control is provided and there is only one set of speaker outlets. However, you do get a headphone socket on the Orell. Front panel styling is simple but attractive and the amp has a pleasing, solid feel.

At £399, the Orell SA-040 Special Edition lies at the upper end of our chosen price range. And it certainly looks the part, even if it is not over-endowed with features and facilities.

The CD input is attenuated, so I did most of my auditioning work with the CD player fed into the tuner input, which sounded crisper. I expect most people will find this to be true, but if your CD player is bright or harsh-sounding, use the slugged CD input.

The Orell amplifier produced a very satisfying sound on CD. It was sweet, yet clean and open, with a great deal of clarity and fine detail present. Orchestral strings were smooth, yet attacking. The overall impression was of a very involving and expressive sound quality.

Records sounded good, too, and generally I felt that the sound was worthy of top marks. But in this test the Orell falls below the excellent Kelvin Labs amp. Its lack of facilities

may be a drawback for some, though ironically this is partly what helped the amp achieve a superior sound quality. You can't have it both ways.

The Orell SA-040SE emerged as one of the best amplifiers in the group. It's certainly worth hearing.