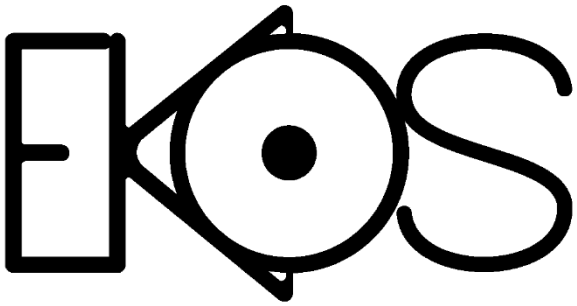


LISTEN TO BELIEVE

THE FIRST

User Manual

Contents

Manufacturing and Assembly Page 5

Placement Page 5

AC Power Page 5

Cable Selection Page 5

Care and Maintenance Page 5

Power-On and Startup Page 5

Rear Panel and Connections Page 6

Power-On Page 7

Errors and Troubleshooting Page 8

Flashing LED – Magenta

Flashing LED – Red

Flashing LED – Yellow

Technical Specifications Page 10

User Notes and Revisions Page 11

Manufacturing and Assembly

Within our laboratories and production facilities in Italy, we maintain absolute control over every stage of development. Our staff follows every Ekos creation with dedication: from the initial concept to the prototype, through to the most rigorous final quality-control protocols.

The printed circuit boards are assembled individually, following standards of excellence that require a strict pre-inspection of every single component. The chassis components are made by specialists selected solely for their craftsmanship and are then assembled by hand at our premises.

Every Ekos unit undergoes multiple review cycles, both electronic and mechanical, to ensure that each product meets the same rigorous standards of perfection. At the end of assembly, every single unit is tested individually. After a 48-hour technical burn-in, each product is subjected to a second round of complete testing to verify its electrical performance and the integrity of the audio signal.

Placement

Correct placement of the Ekos The First power amplifier is essential to preserving its technical integrity and exceptional sonic qualities. For this reason, the unit must not be placed near or above direct heat sources, such as radiators or other power amplifiers.

Natural heat dissipation takes place through the side heat sinks and the opening on the top of the chassis; these must remain free of any obstruction, so please do not place any object on top of the unit. If the amplifier is to be installed inside a cabinet, it is essential to ensure sufficient air volume or an adequate ventilation system. Failure to observe these precautions may cause an excessive rise in operating temperature, with the risk of compromising the unit's performance or causing malfunctions in the internal circuits.

AC Power

Every Ekos unit is configured exclusively for the mains voltage of the country of distribution. Any change to the input voltage compromises the safety and performance of the product and immediately voids the warranty.

To maximise the sonic performance of The First power amplifier, we recommend paying attention to the correct polarity of the electrical connection. Checking that the plug is correctly phased allows the unit's full audio potential to be realised, ensuring maximum fidelity in reproduction.

Cable Selection

As a High-End product, The First power amplifier is designed to deliver absolute transparency, revealing with extreme precision the characteristics of every element in the audio chain. For this reason, we recommend choosing interconnect and power cables that prioritise sonic neutrality above all.

Cabling should never be regarded as an equalisation tool to compensate for any limitations of the other components; on the contrary, every issue should be resolved at its source. This approach allows the cables to act as a transparent bridge, preserving the integrity of the signal and the natural tonal character that distinguishes every Ekos design.

Care and Maintenance

Ekos components are made using premium materials such as aluminium and Corian, a refined composite of minerals and acrylic resins chosen for its aesthetic and mechanical properties. To preserve the integrity of the surfaces over time, simply use a soft cloth, moistened if necessary with a small amount of water.

We advise against the use of chemical detergents or abrasive products, whose aggressiveness could stain or irreversibly alter the finishes of the chassis. For safety reasons, all cleaning operations must be carried out only after disconnecting the unit from the mains.

Power-On and Startup

Every Ekos amplifier is carefully tested and inspected before delivery. However, maximum sound quality is reached gradually after an initial burn-in period of approximately 40-50 hours of use.

Once this settling phase is complete, to ensure a listening experience at the top of its class, we recommend switching the unit on approximately 30 minutes before use. This short interval allows the internal components to reach the ideal operating temperature, which is necessary to fully express the sonic refinement and dynamics that define The First.

Rear Panel and Connections



Figure 1. Rear panel

1. XLR Right Input
2. XLR Right Pass-Through Output
3. XLR Left Pass-Through Output
4. XLR Left Input
5. Speaker Terminals (Bi-Wiring) Right
6. Speaker Terminals (Bi-Wiring) Left
7. 12V DC Trigger Input
8. Unit Information
9. Ground Hub
10. Power Input
11. Main Switch / Circuit Breaker

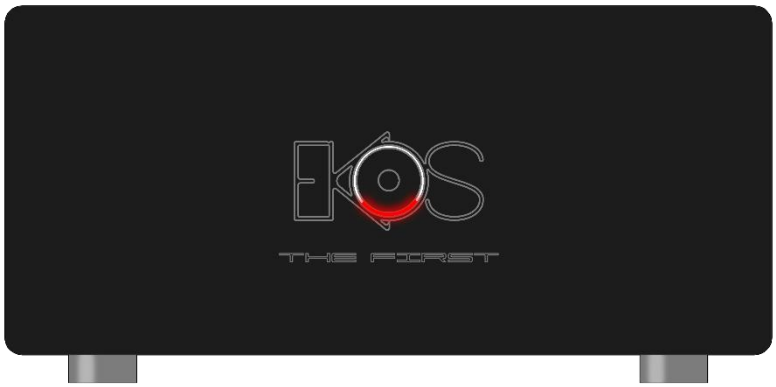
The rear interface of The First power amplifier is designed to ensure perfect electrical contact and uncompromised signal integrity.
To proceed with correct installation, follow this sequence:

1. **Signal and Power Inputs:** Connect the sources to the balanced XLR inputs (1 and 4). Then connect the loudspeaker cables to the output terminals (5 and 6); these accept both Single-Wiring and Bi-Wiring configurations with maximum effectiveness.
2. **Signal and Ground Management:** If your system provides for it, connect the Trigger input (7) for synchronised power-on and the Ground Hub (9), essential for eliminating ground loops and ensuring the lowest possible noise floor.
3. **Power:** Only after verifying that every other connection is stable and correct, insert the power cable into the IEC socket (10) and supply power to the unit.



SAFETY INSTRUCTIONS
WARNING: HAZARDOUS AC CURRENT
Always disconnect the power cable before carrying out any connection, maintenance or relocation of the unit.

Power-On



The First power amplifier uses a sophisticated, minimalist activation system: the centre of the letter “O” in the Ekos logo on the front panel conceals a capacitive touch sensor that acts as the power and standby control.

Figure 2. The First in standby

Power-On Procedure

To ensure maximum protection of the system and the loudspeakers, we recommend following this sequence:

1. Switch on the system sources (turntable, CD player, streamer, etc.).
2. Switch on the preamplifier.
3. Wait a few moments for the components in the audio chain to stabilise.
4. Start the Ekos The First power amplifier by touching the centre of the letter “O” in the logo for about 3 seconds.

Once activated, the amplifier begins a progressive power-on cycle monitored by the LED ring behind the logo. The light transition follows the progress of the internal circuits: the ring gradually illuminates in red to indicate the loading phase, finally turning steady blue once the unit is ready for listening.

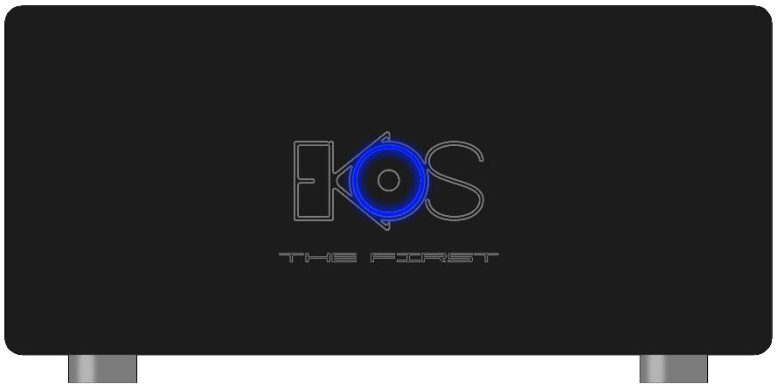


Figure 3. The First powered on

Power-Off Procedure

To preserve the integrity of the electronic components and the loudspeakers, the power-off phase must follow the reverse order of start-up:

1. Switch off the Ekos The First power amplifier by keeping contact on the letter “O” in the logo for about 3 seconds.
2. Then switch off the preamplifier and the remaining system sources.

IMPORTANT: Always make sure the amplifier is completely switched off before connecting or disconnecting any cable from the audio system. This precaution prevents sudden surges that could damage the internal circuits or the loudspeakers.

The First power amplifier incorporates a sophisticated active monitoring system designed to preserve the integrity of the internal circuits and the connected loudspeakers. If the unit detects an electrical or environmental anomaly, whether during power-on or operation, the protection system intervenes promptly, preventing or suspending power delivery to avert any possible damage.

If a protection is triggered, the LED ring of the front logo communicates the nature of the event through a specific colour or flashing pattern.

If the anomaly persists, or to receive dedicated technical assistance, please report the error encountered by writing directly to our technical department: **info@ekos-acoustic.com**

Flashing LED – Magenta

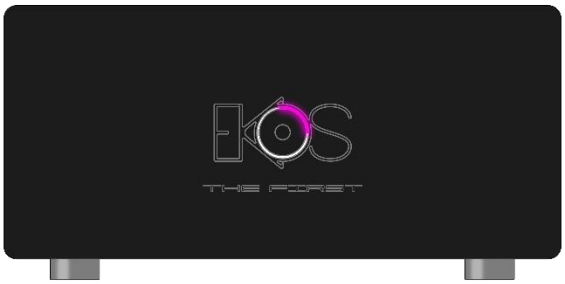


Figure 4. Current Error / Protection **Sector A**

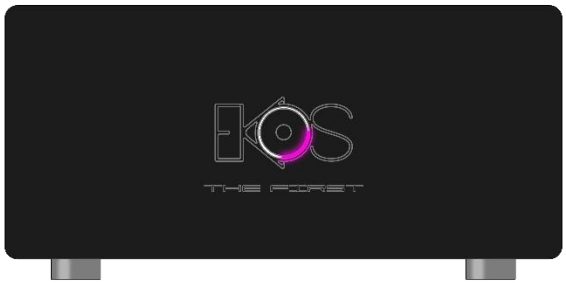


Figure 5. Current Error / Protection **Sector B**



Figure 6. Current Error / Protection **Sector C**

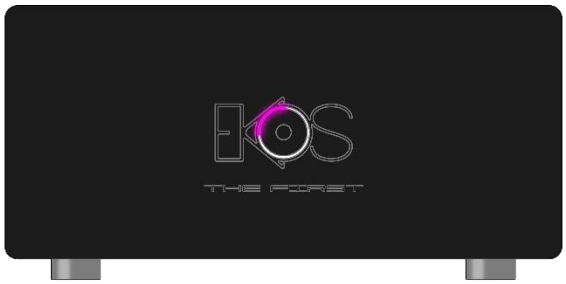


Figure 7. Current Error / Protection **Sector D**

If the LED ring flashes magenta, it means the system has detected a short circuit on one of the loudspeaker outputs. The indication is extremely precise: the flashing of the LED concentrates on a specific sector of the logo to identify the channel and polarity affected by the anomaly.

Sector A: Right channel positive (R+) – See Figure 4
Sector B: Right channel negative (R-) – See Figure 5
Sector C: Left channel positive (L+) – See Figure 6
Sector D: Left channel negative (L-) – See Figure 7

Troubleshooting procedure: If this indication appears, carefully check the routing of the power cables, inspecting both the terminals on the rear panel of the amplifier and the loudspeaker terminals. Make sure there is no contact between the positive and negative signal conductors, checking the integrity of the connectors and the absence of bare wires or accidental contacts.

Flashing LED – Red

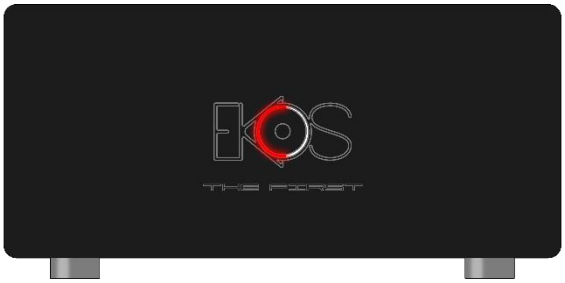


Figure 8. Left channel high-temperature error

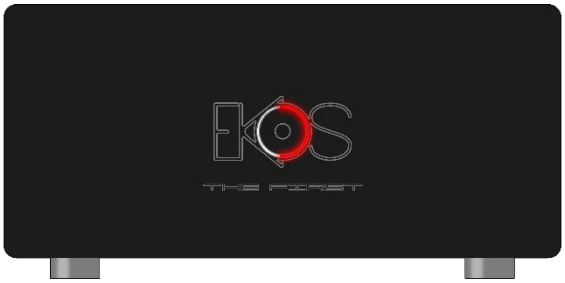


Figure 9. Right channel high-temperature error

If the LED ring flashes red, it means the system has detected internal overheating. As with the short-circuit diagnostics, the flashing is localised on the sector of the logo corresponding to the channel that has exceeded the critical threshold of 70 °C. Upon reaching this temperature, the amplifier suspends operation to protect the output transistors and internal components.

Troubleshooting procedure: To restore normal operating conditions, the unit must be allowed to cool down by following these steps:

- **Placement check:** Make sure the amplifier is located in a sufficiently ventilated area, avoiding installation in closed cabinets or niches without air circulation.
- **Thermal isolation:** Check that no other electronics are positioned in the immediate vicinity (above or below the unit) that could transfer heat indirectly to the amplifier or restrict heat dissipation from the top of the amplifier.
- **Cooling cycle:** Switch off the unit and wait at least 30 minutes. This interval allows the thermal mass of the aluminium and Corian chassis to dissipate the accumulated heat and bring the circuits back to a safe operating temperature.

Flashing LED – Yellow

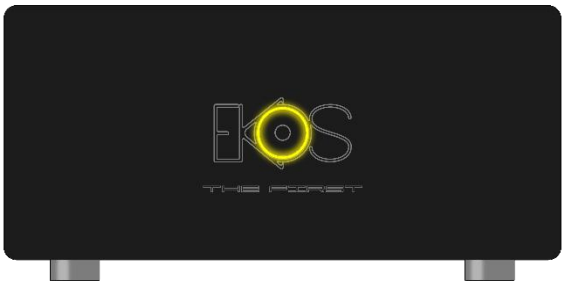


Figure 10. DC current presence error

If the LED ring flashes yellow, it means the system has detected a direct current (DC) presence higher than 4 V at the loudspeaker output terminals. This protective intervention is essential to preserve the integrity of the loudspeakers and usually indicates an anomaly in the signal sent to the amplifier or an issue in the upstream chain.

Troubleshooting procedure: If this indication appears, a rigorous check of the system is required:

- **Signal analysis:** Check the input signal and make sure the interconnect cables used are intact and of adequate quality.
- **Source check:** Make sure the preamplifier or connected source does not present DC offset values higher than 5 mV. A value exceeding this at the source is in fact amplified by the power amplifier, triggering the unit's safety shutdown.

Technical Specifications

Nominal output power:

330 watts RMS @ 8 ohms
660 watts RMS @ 4 ohms
1320 watts RMS @ 2 ohms
Class A/B

Analog inputs:

2 x XLR > 47 kohms
2 x XLR bypass output

Gain:

32 dB for maximum output

Loudspeaker output impedance:

< 0.2 ohms from 10 Hz to 40 kHz
(measured at 8 ohms)

Frequency response:

1.0 Hz - 300 kHz, ± 0.1 dB

Slew rate:

> 1300 V/µs

DC output voltage:

± 5 mV

Total harmonic distortion and noise (THD+N):

-101 dB from 5 Hz to 100 kHz

Signal-to-noise ratio:

> 116 dB (A) @ nominal power

Power consumption:

2.5 watts standby, 40 watts @ idle,
2500 watts @ maximum consumption

Dimensions in mm:

440 x 447 x 216 (WxDxH)

Dimensions in inches:

17.33 x 17.60 x 8.5 (WxDxH)

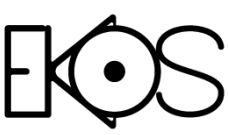
Weight:

45 kg

Fuse rating:

115 volts: 20A (T)
230 volts: 10A (T)
Factory selectable

User Notes and Revisions



Residenza Apollo 1 – 06135 Perugia – Italy
www.ekos-acoustic.com info@ekos-acoustic.com