

## Rave Reviews



**Earthquake Cinéova Grande Multichannel Amplifier**  
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### Earthquake Cineova Grande 5-channel Power Amplifier

Earthquake Sound Corporation is a division of Hohmann International Group. They manufacture mobile, home and pro audio electronic components with a factory in Menlo Park, California and associations in Asia. The Earthquake brand is well known in car audio and the company also makes huge quantities of OEM electronic devices which are incorporated into other manufacturer's products or sold under other brand names as complete components.

Earthquake has recently started to branch out into markets by introducing home theater speaker systems, subwoofers (see WSR's Essential Subwoofer Buyer's Guide™ for reviews of two of their models) and the flagship home theatre amplifier reviewed here.

The Cineova Grande multichannel amplifier submitted for this review is an impressive piece that should bring some well-deserved attention to the Earthquake brand name in the home theatre arena. The Cinenova amplifier is made in the USA.

### Outside

The Earthquake Cineova Grande is a huge amplifier that weighs 125 pounds. It is bigger and more powerful than other amplifier in this review group and, for that matter, most other amplifiers in the review series. It has bold, dramatic appearance and is nicely finished.

The front panel is made from a thick, aluminum extrusion. Six polished horizontal fins and the Cineova Grande badge are produced by CNC machining on the face of this extrusion and the result is an elegant, if somewhat less than subtle, three-dimensional look. There is a power switch at the lower left of the front panel with an integral LED power indicator and five LEDs labeled LF, Center, RF, LS, RS are centered on the lower section of the panel. These LEDs show when the indicated channel is over-driven (clipping) but I never saw them light up and I doubt that most users will either. Driving an amplifier with this much power into clipping is likely to damage your speakers and your ears.

Large sturdy handles on the front panel makes it a little easier to move this behemoth around but positioning the Cineova Grande on a shelf is still a two man job. (There is only one of me so I placed the amplifier on an amp stand between my front speakers for the listening session.

The back of the amplifier is divided up into six segments. The power input segment at the right edge that contains a 20amp AC connector for a removable power cord, a 20amp circuit breaker for additional electrical protection. And a 25-pin parallel port with audio input connection for each channel plus two trigger connections.

Each of the five amplifier modules has its own connector plate and these segments constitute the remainder of the back panel. There are single-ended RCA input connectors and five-way binding post speaker output connectors for each channel. There are fuse holders for plus and minus rail fuses on each module connector plate along with LEDs to indicate when a rail fuse is blown.

Each amplifier module has a selector switch to engage a built-in high-pass/low-pass filter. The user can select high-pass, low-pass or bypass and choose a crossover frequency between 20Hz and 5kHz.

The 12 gauge steel cover is very heavy and it is attached by no fewer than 23 socket head cap screws.

### Inside

The chassis layout of the Cineova Grande is similar to the other amplifiers in this review segment, but everything is scaled up in size. There is an enormous 40 pound, 3.6kVA, ferrite core toroidal power transformer positioned vertically just behind the front panel. This transformer is constructed with special attention paid to the inductance of the primary windings. The transformer primary is said to have ideal inductance characteristics allowing it to act as a power line-filter, which can smooth the "power factor" notch from the AC line. The toroidal transformer has independent secondary windings for each amplifier channel. The transformer mount is isolated with ten layers of pressed foam for mechanical hum suppression.

The amplifier modules start just behind the power transformer and extend to the rear of the unit. They are arranged side by side in the densely packed interior of the chassis. Each of the five amplifier modules is completely independent and easily removable. Earthquake has trademarked the acronym EZXS to describe the easy access to the amplifier modules, which can be individually removed and serviced without dismantling the entire amplifier.

Each amplifier channel has rectification and 24,000µf of capacitance. JFET inputs, bipolar drivers and bipolar outputs are utilized. Components are mounted on multi-layer, glass-epoxy, double-sided printed circuit boards with ground plane isolation and heavy copper traces. There are 10 output devices per channel.

Each amplifier module has a built-in, fully buffered high-pass/low-pass variable filter. Each module can run full-range or can be low-pass or high-pass filtered at frequencies between 20Hz and 5kHz.

The Cineova Grande is rated at 300 watts per channel into eight ohms, 600 watts per channel into four ohms and 1000 watts per channel into two ohms, with all channels driven. Its robust construction should allow it to easily meet the four-ohm spec making it one of the most powerful multi channel amplifiers that I've reviewed. The two-ohm spec is quite reasonable for a typical duty cycle but you'll need special wiring to wring more than five kilowatts from the wall.

### Sound

The power of the Cineova Grande amplifier was indeed very evident in my listening test. This amplifier seemed to loaf along effortlessly at levels where others were beginning to sound strained. Bass control was exemplary as the amplifier took complete command of the loud speakers.

I used stereo and multi channel music recordings to evaluate the sound of the Cineova and I watched a variety of movies with this amplifier as a power source. It performed admirably in all circumstances.

The Earthquake amplifier performed quieter than the others in this group. This increased (perceived) signal-to-noise ratio allowed more details about the signal to become clearly audible. There was a sense of clarity and ease to the sound that others couldn't quite match. Lateral image focus was excellent and a sense of depth or three-dimensionality was very well presented. The sound was smooth and musical up to very high levels whether listening to a music CD or watching an action film on DVD. The CineNova started to sound just a little hard on extreme peaks at the top end of its power range but this only occurred at extremely high levels in testing, never in normal listening.

The Cinenova Grande equaled or exceeded the dynamic power of any amplifier I've reviewed. The Cine N ova easily matches or beats anything I've heard in the \$4k price category.

### Conclusion

The other amplifiers in this group each deliver a lot of high quality sound for the money. This one provides a little more of everything for a little more money.

The Earthquake amplifier delivers far more real world power than most other contenders for the high power throne and it sounds better too. It's significantly more powerful than the others in this group and it delivers slightly more refined sound. While the manufacturer's suggested retail price of this amplifier is \$4,000, the street price may be lower. You won't get more value for your money anywhere. Highly recommended