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Subject: 12AX7s

Posted by [James Christopher](#) on Fri, 18 Jul 2008 04:55:06 GMT

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Wayne-- Standard, 17mm longplate Telefunken are one of the few 12AX7s that sound at least OK in darn near anything you install them in (there are a FEW exceptions, of course as always!) To debunk a myth, the Telefunken ribbed OR smooth have virtually identical sonics tho I prefer slightly the early ribbed plates from 1958-about 1965. The best Teles have a small Telefunken diamond logo in chalky white paint near the base of the tube and say "made in WESTERN Germany." Always look for the "WESTERN" Germany; these are earlier than the later just "Germany" marked stock. Of course, I have never heard the Audio Note, and my ears/system/room/musical tastes (like yours) are unique. But Teles are a safe bet. Most are so well made that even Ebay-bought examples are generally quiet and solid performers. Definitely a tube for your short list. Another huge myth concerns the Telefunken ECC803s. This has a 6DJ8 type plate structure, and the modern JJ E83CC "boxplate" is a direct copy of the Telefunken Ecc803S. These can cost \$1000+ EACH in original boxes. I had a phonograde pair in the early 1990s for which I paid \$275; I thought I was robbed! I sure wish I had them to sell now... but not to listen to. That is the driest, most cold/sterile/non-musical of all the well-regarded old stock 12AX7s. I would take a 1960s RCA grayplate over this alleged "holy-grail" 12AX7! The legend status is strictly due to the Asian collector market placing rarity/exclusivity over sonics. The standard Telefunken 17mm plate 12AX7 is neutral, sonically balanced, has excellent soundstaging, and is a very transparent sounding 12AX7. A great tube for phono use that preserves the intrinsic sonic character of what is fed into it. Some do not like it's treble response, which can be a bit "silvery" compared to the more golden/honey colored treble of 1950s longplate Mullards and RCA blackplates, but in a system that has smooth, ambient treble almost no other tube except perhaps Dutch Amperex 1960-1968 14mm plate can duplicate the uncolored treble extension and detail of a Telefunken.

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