Subject: Pi 2's with Bottlehead Paramour Review
Posted by Drew W on Tue, 26 Feb 2002 18:37:33 GMT
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Hi Wayne!I've had my (factory built) Pi 2's for a little over a month now and you asked me to give you a review. I hope you (and the rest of the readers) are patient, because I don't think I've ever done a written review of anything before and I didn't arrive at my conclusions in any kind of straight line. It also seemed to be that until recently there were very few reviews in this forum about using Pi's with SET amps. I'm going to try to express my thoughts as clearly as I can, but if anyone has any questions I will certainly try to contribute in a positive way and help.I really should give a little background as to why I purchased the Pi 2's. I ordered a Bottlehead Paramour/Foreplay comvo back in the first week of September. I received them via UPS the last week of November. I believe one of the reasons it took so long was because of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. I've been listening to music on low-fi boomboxes since I've been out of high school (about 15 years) due to being in the military and traveling around the country for the company that I work for for the last 10 years. No sense in making a big investment.But now wanted something nicer. I wanted something different for the Bose systems everyone is buying at Best Buy. And a kit tube amp seemed like the cool way to do it.Since I live in an apartment and really don't have the tools for woodworking I was really sure I didn't want to build the enclosure myself. I looked at some Klipsch Heresy's on Ebay but was worried about the condition of what I would be getting. Also the local high end audio stores seem to be going away in favor of Best Buy and Cicuit City. :(The day I received the Paramour Kits I tried to call Wayne, but his wife answered and said he was a little busy with his day job. Hey, no problem. Good to know someone doesn't have to worry about unemployment!After a few attempts I finally got thru and we talked for almost an hour. I really appreciated that. He assured me (and he was quite right) that the efficient Pi 2 speaker would be enough for a 3.5 watt SET amp.He said the Pi 2's probably wouldn't give the lowest octave but that people who've used his speakers with SET amps prefer the Pi 1 and 2's.He told he it would take 6-8 weeks to receive them. That was a little bit of a disappointment because I kinda wanted them by Christmas. But I kinda procrastinated by waiting until the day the Paramours arrived before making a decision so that wasn't his fault. Such is life.I built the Paramours/Foreplay in a few days. Being impatient I hooked some 32 ohm Sennheiser headphones to the Paramours and wired them for 16 ohms (the highest it would go). Initially I wasn't very impressed. It seemed hazy and boxed in. I thought it was the impedance mismatch. But guess what... In about 10 days of listening to it 2-3 hours a day, it cleared up! The haze turned to clarity and the tone was perfect bottom to top. I asked a friend to listen to it said he thought the soundstage was amazing! I figured it was the tubes breaking in. Just made sure to keep the volume turned down so I wouldn't destroy my hearing. After about 6 weeks (mid January) I received the Pi 2's, I wired the Paramours for 8 ohm speakers and hooked them up.Seemed like I was missing something in the audio spectrum. Wayne said to me that I'd probably be missing the very lowest octave, but thats not where it was. It seemed to me like it was lacking in the upper bass/lower midrandge. For awhile I was checking my speaker cables to make sure they weren't out of phase. I tried messing around with speaker placement and it didn't seem to change. For awhile I even questioned whether I was imagining it or whether something was wrong with my hearing because when I was in the military I was in the field artillery putting 105mm howitzer shells downrange (even though I've been out of the Army for over 10 years.) When I started this project I had told my coworkers that I was working on some tube amps and having some speakers made by a guy in Oklahoma and they kinda had laughed at me. Now they were asking me how it was going and I didn't really know how to respond. I also have a work

situation where I could take the whole system in and give a demo and they certainly wanted me to. But I wasn't sure that I wanted to at that point. I did mention something about my problem it to one coworker who claimed he used to be into high end audio but he said without hearing it he couldn't be sure what the problem was. I'm sure glad I was patient with it.Well... I don't have a scientific explaination for it. But it took about another 2 weeks (maybe a little longer) of having it playing a couple hours every night and everything changed again. I went home from work one night and everything seemed to be there. Threw on The Eagles - Hotel California and the guitar seemed to have perfect tone. The separation between the instruments was amazing. Clarity was the best of anything I've certainly ever owned and maybe the best I've ever heard. Perhaps never having used the 8 ohm taps on the transformer required another break in period. Anyone have any ideas on this? I really didn't expect such a drastic change. Especially with the change I'd experienced in the first 10 days with the headphones.Anyway, last Tuesday I brought the whole enchilada to work, with my Harmon Kardon HDCD player. Everyone was blown away. One of the guys who laughed when I told him I was building a 3.5 watt tube amp said it sounded like I took Pink Floyd out of the studio and them in the room. They all couldn't believe it had such perfect tone.The Cranberries "Every One Else is Doing it Why Can't We" is popular and its been my "reference recording" thru much of this and we played that and the acoustic guitar was crystal clear and the separation between all the instruments is incredible. The 3D soundstage on the percussion (and everything else) is the best I've ever owned. And if I turn the volume on the Foreplay preamp up to about 25% volume for any length of time, it hurt their ears! In my apartment I'd have no problem getting the cops over, if you know what I mean.Quite a few of them are seriously talking about trying out some DIY audio. I'm tickled pink.