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Subject: Re: Japanese philosophy

Posted by [metasonix](#) on Fri, 11 Jun 2004 18:50:50 GMT

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I was just trying to say that the Japanese aren't audio gods. They are very, very fallible human beings. They often place subjectivism on a golden platform, as if it could exist on its own--a problem that Caucasians are equally prone to. My issue is that the Sound Practices gang (and some others, to be fair) tends to holify every fad that comes from MJ magazine as if it were a sermon from the mount. I have heard a lot (A LOT) of single-ended tube amps. Some of them sounded really great, and some of them were abysmal. Some commonplace commercial amps sound excellent, and some lovingly-built homebrew projects sound bad. It's literally all over the map. And it doesn't help to have had conversations with people like MJ's Mac Watanabe and Koichi Hanzawa. They are quite willing to admit that they are disturbed by some of the articles appearing in their own magazine, often things written by their most popular contributors. (Mr. Sakuma is a prime example but not the only one. It's funny, I've never heard Sakuma's amps myself, but people who have heard them often seem to complain--frequently--about how awful they usually sound. And yet, Sakuma is a consummate salesman and cheerleader, and enjoys a considerable worldwide audience.) Their obsession with old American speakers is another strangeness. I'm sorry, but I just don't think Altec A7s are magical. To me they are (still) just old P A speakers, having really high efficiency and really bad horn-speaker flaws. I've heard some reproductions that were carefully built and set up in a good listening room, with a good SE amp--and still wasn't impressed. The same goes for Klipschorns. Only a damn fool would use K-horns with an average solid-state amp. That is one "classic" speaker that responds really well to a low-power tube amp. But it is still not for everyone--being VERY sensitive to room setup and ambient acoustics. (And let's not even bring up the Japanese obsession with JBL Hartsfields and Paragons....I won't repeat that old joke about burying Eero Saarinen....) Sorry if I offended, just trying to point out that you can't always trust the members of a given "scene" as if they were infallible. Some aspects of Japanese culture are charming, and some are very, very disturbing to me. And I've often wondered if violent manga bondage cartoons and SE tube amps have some kind of unspoken social relationship or connection. They are both quite "off the wall", compared to the mores of American society. SE amps almost seem alien, from another planet, compared to what the mainstream electronics industry is focused on, in terms of design goals and procedures. And btw, SE tube amps still aren't a very big part of American high-end audio. The giant push-pull 6550 amps made by Audio Research, VTL, Conrad-Johnson etc. still outsell SE amps by a 10-1 ratio or more. I feel that high-end audio is still more about the unbound ego of the rich and powerful white/asian male, than it is about good sound. That is probably a good socially-responsible reason for the SE-amp movement--less is more, meaning, a simple amp with only one tube doesn't feed the swollen ego. Nothing wrong with that. I'd just like to see more consistency in how it's implemented. Hopefully that helps?

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