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Subject: Successful Frustration

Posted by [gofar99](#) on Wed, 05 Jun 2024 01:29:38 GMT

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Hi Everyone. I posted this on [diyaudioprojects.com](#) as well sine they are the site hosting many of the trials and tribulations over the years.

"Successful Frustration"

How can you be both really glad you accomplished something and frustrated at the same time. Easy if you are an audiophile and someone who designs and builds their own gear. It has taken just over 15 years to achieve this paradox. Before then I had what many would consider pretty good gear. A Phillips 212 turntable with empire cartridge, a Marantz 1060 console amplifier (I still have it and it is connected to the PC I am writing this on) and some diy 30 cm speakers made by Utah in 5 cubic foot boxes. Then I bought my first tube amplifier kit...you guessed it an S-5. There were a few wrinkles with it. First it didn't have all the correct parts and second the company at the time was not as customer friendly as I would have expected. Eventually that got sorted out and I built the amp. Even though it was not as nice sounding as I would have liked the tube sound was alluring. Several of us on the WEB made various mods to it and improved it a bit. At this point tubes were something I had used in amateur radio and were not mystical as some folks think. I figured I could make a better amplifier. Thus, the first what came to be called the Oddwatts were born. Rather modest at first with push pull EL84s running class A for about 5 watts. (the first Poddwatt that still works just fine) They were certainly not perfect, but were much nicer sounding than the S-5. And to be sure a bit more costly. I upped the game with bigger amps over the years until the largest used KT120s. They all are a similar design configuration. What I had stumbled upon worked very well and there didn't (and still doesn't) seem to be a reason to change the design. Along the way I designed companion line stage preamps (the Forewatts) and phonograph preamps (the Grooves). For the last few years, I have been making subtle changes to all of them in the pursuit of the best possible sound without having to mortgage the house to pay for them. Simultaneously I wanted the designs to be diy friendly. All of them are, but a few require some skills in building them. Now, comes the accomplishment part, I wanted the amps to sound better than what was my reference amplifiers. These are a pair of Marantz receivers from the mid 1970s. This was a time period that the brand was still cranking out superior gear. For a number of years later they seem to have deviated from that concept. They are now once again back to that level of performance and quality. At the same time, I wanted the preamplifiers to match in excellence. I confirmed today that my set of tube amps and preamps at least to my ears and confirmed by test data on the bench are more musical and better sounding than all my references. Only one phono preamp (solid state) is a little quieter. Just a few DBs. In the minus 90 to -95 range none of it is audible. A lot of this is naturally subjective. My most definitive test is what I call the "shiver" factor. Most serious listeners will recognize this easily. An alternative is the "hairs on the neck" factor. In either case, the sound that causes you to shiver (or have neck prickling) is the most realistic to you. My personal gear now does this more often than the reference gear. Thus, at least in my perspective I have accomplished what I set out to do years ago. For information, the rest of the system consists of an Empire 598 with Jelco 370H arm and Grado Sonata II, a diy ex Dual 701 (the drive only as the rest was toast) also with a Jelco 370H and a Dynavector Ruby Karat 23MR-RS, a pair of 200 liter subs with 30 cm Altec Lansing drivers, a pair of Martin Logan ESLs, and assorted things like an Akai reel to reel, a OPPO SE player, a Nakamichi cassette recorder, a dedicated PC, and for compatibility, a

Bluetooth receiver. Now, the frustration part. What to design or build next? I suppose many other folks have been at this juncture. I accomplished what I wanted to do 15 years ago and now have no clear path to go forward. More tweaking of the gear is unlikely to produce anything significant. I have no desire to go back into digital stuff. I did that for many years and it holds no interest now. I dabble in solid state things that are useful like phonograph preamps. They are quite excellent and need no further development. If this were a job, I would say it is time to retire. But since I did that twice in the past and most recently in 2011 it doesn't seem to apply. Perhaps I should just spend all the time listening to the massive number of LPs and tapes I have. Probably not. So, I guess I need to find some new type of gear to design and build. I hope you all are as successful in accomplishing your goals right up to the point of "successful frustration".

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