Subject: Me Want Valve Amp. 8^)
Posted by Dave Williams on Sun, 29 May 2005 15:23:39 GMT
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So, after a couple of years of contemplation, I'm getting serious about getting a tube amp; probably a kit. Now I know the "which tube amp kit" thread has been done about a gazillion times, but I hope I can appeal to folks here for some more thoughts.Basically, I'd say my budget is $750-$800 or so. Musical tastes are all over the map; jazz and fusion of all kinds, classic and progressive rock (old and new), various acoustic ensembles, and burgeoning interest in choral and orchestral.I'm after balance and good extension both directions, good speed and detail, but doesn't need to be the last word (still want CD's listenable, please). Sloppy bass is a major pet peeve, and I don't like systems that are too bright.Currently under consideration are:DIY Hi-Fi Ella or Joplin 2A3StoetkitParamours*Decware** I'm very intrigued by the SET thing, but I won't have the budget to go after new speakers for a while, and my current speaks are only around 91 db/1W which isn't going to cut it. I really like various small-scale acoustic music, but I also like to rock out sometimes and listen to a fair amount of pretty demanding music, although not at huge volumes. Also, while I'd like to try some of Wayne's speakers when I DO go for new ones, I'm not sure I want to be constrained to only uber-high efficiency speakers; the open-baffle thing is something I'd really like to try.So here are some specific questions people can maybe help with; or maybe not, 8^):- Anyone heard both Ella and Joplin that can compare?Obviously stock Ella has bags more power, but various things I've read indicate that the thing to do with Ella is wire her in triode mode with no feedback which comes in I guess around 12W or so. So I'm curious how they'd compare in that configuration where the power differential is limited.- How might Ella and Stoetkit stack up against each other fidelity-wise? Respective scope for upgrades?- I recall that someone on here (Bill E., I think?) has an Ella that has seen significant experimentation/upgrade. Curious about how, with some energy expended, the sound has progressed, and how you feel it stacks up to the other players in the field.- I'd prefer not to have to shell out for a preamp as well. As I understand it, the Ella now has 2 pairs inputs, although is passive volume control. Is that the same deal with Stoetkit, Jr.?- What options am I not considering that I should be?Thanks for any and all responses.Cheers,Dave

Subject: Re:Me Too!
Posted by BillEpstein on Sun, 29 May 2005 16:11:50 GMT
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By taking the equity out of Ella I'm about (Friday) to pull the trigger on a very (for me) expensive kit.The really wonderful dilemma you face is that any of the choices will make you a "proud papa" and yield a lot of listening pleasure.That's knowledge re-inforced for me by listening to the Norh SE-9.Even the most humble circuits do some things well. Ansd even the best have shortcomings.Ella is a great design that is excellent ouit of the box. With the mods I did it was just great. It did some things, dynamics and low-distortion at high levels, better than most. But you don't "hear ino the music" the way you do with SET's. Some SET's. The Paramour turns your head only now and then. The Norh all the time but eventually you realise there is a problem with the transition from mids to highs even ay low levels. And the bass; full and weighty are the EL-34's

in push-pull but as an SET kinda overblown.That's what modifications are about: raising the quality of strengths and eliminating weaknesses. Genetic engineering.I'm going to guess here based on familiarity with the 2A3 as well as actually hearing the EL-34 in P=P and SET side by side. The 2A3 Joplin should,.....should, sound best of the group you name. On the Magnequest Forum there's also a "Seth" P-P 2A3 which you can build in nearly kit form. I'm not sure of the price, close to $800 I think.
Seth

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Subject: Stoetkit
Posted by Wayne Parham on Sun, 29 May 2005 17:14:09 GMT
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The Stoetkit has two inputs and a volume control. Sweeeeet sound and great looks too. It gets my vote.

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Subject: Re: Me Want Valve Amp. 8^)
Posted by FredT on Sun, 29 May 2005 21:24:32 GMT
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With 91dB speakers I wouldn't consider anything less powerful than an EL34/6550/KT88 amp like the Ella. I listen to 91dB speakers with an Ella (great), a 300B (OK for music that's not too dynamic) and a 2A3 (grossly inadequate for anything but solo acoustic guitar). There are several good EL34 amps out there and the Ella doesn't have the boutique quality parts of some of the more expensive ones, but it's a very good value for the price. Just my two cents.

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Subject: Re:Me Too!
Posted by Dave Williams on Sun, 29 May 2005 22:32:49 GMT
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Thanks, BillI konw they're all great products which is why the decision is difficult. The "hear into the music" thing is exactly what tempts me about SET's, just wary of the tradeoffs associated with that choice. I've a feeling I'll just have to prepare myself to ultimately have a couple of amps. Oh darn... 8^)Have you enumerated anywhere the various upgrades you've done to your Ella? Is yours wired point-to-point? That appears to be a kind of a recent change to the stock item.I'm glad you mentioned the MQ DIY stuff because I'd seen the Horus there before, but forgotten all about it. The Seth is new since I last looked there. Also looks a really nice option, but from perusing the MQ prices, it seems to me it would be hard to do for much less than $1000 just in iron/chokes.Out of curiosity, what's your impending purchase?Dave

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Subject: Re: Stoetkit
Posted by Dave Williams on Sun, 29 May 2005 22:34:33 GMT
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Thanks for the recco, Wayne.  I have noted over time all the great things you've had to say about this little number.  That's actually how I found out about it.  8^)

Subject: Re: Me Want Valve Amp. 8^)
Posted by Dave Williams on Sun, 29 May 2005 22:39:04 GMT
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Certainly I'll be upgrading speakers at some point in the future, probably to something at least somewhat more efficient.  But it's not going to be immediate after I've shelled out for an amp (and probably a new source as well), so ideally I'd like something that will be at least tolerable for a while with the current speaks.Ella does seem like pretty good value, and with lots of options for upgrade.Am I also correct that getting a decent tube complement will be a lot cheaper on an EL34 platform than 2A3?

Subject: Re: Me Want Valve Amp. 8^)
Posted by Wayne Parham on Sun, 29 May 2005 22:46:07 GMT
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I think the Ella is good amp too.  Very good value from a good company, in my opinion.

Subject: Re: Me Want Valve Amp. 8^)
Posted by Russell Black on Sun, 29 May 2005 23:32:53 GMT
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Try one of these. I've got one, it sounds fantastic and the price is right. The pushpull MAG15 looks pretty good, but I havn't heard one.Gabe is a nice guy to deal with and I have no doubts about the quality of his offerings.
CGV-300B

Subject: Re:Me Too!

Posted by BillEpstein on Sun, 29 May 2005 23:33:26 GMT
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Ella upgrades from the archives;For those of you scoring at home the mods effected her in this order from major to minor: Auricaps TKD Volume Pot Choke Schottky Diodes Triode mode Kiwame Resistors Rear-mounting the volume pot Vampire female RCA's, CCC Magnet wire, wire dress  Begin with the choke that comes with for $19 and the stock Valve Art EL-34's are excellent. Easy to roll but the 6922/6DJ8's have greater influence. Stoetkit tubes are cheap, too.

Subject: Re: Me Want Valve Amp. 8^)
Posted by Manualblock on Mon, 30 May 2005 11:46:10 GMT
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Hi There; I have been looking at the Mag 15 and even posted that site on this forum some time ago. That amp you have seemed so simple to design I wondered how good it could sound. You say it is very good, have you compared it to any other amps? The Mag uses a Paraphase splitter which made me nervous but in reality those old Magnavox amps sound very good so I would be interested to hear your opinion about the CGV as opposed to any other similar amps.Which speaks do you use? You can't beat his price.

Subject: Re: Me Want Valve Amp. 8^) - CGV300B
Posted by Russell Black on Mon, 30 May 2005 13:08:08 GMT
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I can't compare this with other tube amps (I come from a solid state background, but I can tell you this - the sound is detailed, clean and naturalistic. I can follow basslines better with this amp than any other I have heard. The imaging/soundstaging is great - its not like other amplifiers - its a little hard to describe, but it can be very impressive.I guess there is alot to be said for good circuit design and sensible parts selection, as opposed to needless complexity and expense.My only "reservation" is that I would love to hear the MAG15 - more power and punch.Of course all this is completely subjective I have a pair the Bob Brines FT1600s (mark 1).

Subject: Re: Me Want Valve Amp. 8^) - CGV300B
Posted by Manualblock on Mon, 30 May 2005 13:11:03 GMT
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Thanks; Your reply is very helpfull. How did you come to decide on Gabes stuff if I may ask? Also

what do you think about the Tube rectifier vs the SS rectifier option?

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Subject: Re: Me Want Valve Amp. 8^) - CGV300B
Posted by Russell Black on Mon, 30 May 2005 13:26:44 GMT
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I did a lot of looking at the net, tried to sort out the hype and in the end I took a punt. What swung me (other than price) was the amount of information on Gabes site - pictures are one thing, but sometimes I prefer a thousand words. I'm no electronic guru, but you could do worse than take Gabes advice in this.

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Subject: Re: Me Want Valve Amp. 8^) - CGV300B
Posted by Manualblock on Mon, 30 May 2005 14:59:10 GMT
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You are right he is very down to earth and hype-free. His schematics are tried and proven designs and he puts the money where it counts.

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Subject: Reluctant Virgins
Posted by FredT on Tue, 31 May 2005 10:27:43 GMT
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Flea power SET amps are reluctant virgins. They're voluptuously sensuous and irresistibly sexy. Their voice is warm and soft. The fabric of their music is so real you can reach out and touch it (almost). But when you want to get down and dirty with some serious stuff they say in a whiney little voice "Ohhhh, Noooo, I can't do this".

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Subject: Re: Reluctant Virgins
Posted by Manualblock on Tue, 31 May 2005 13:01:23 GMT
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It was tough being a teenager wasn't it?

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Subject: Re: Reluctant Virgins
Posted by Wayne Parham on Tue, 31 May 2005 16:02:27 GMT
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Subject: Re: Reluctant Virgins
Posted by FredT on Tue, 31 May 2005 22:17:34 GMT
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Yes, I was a teenager back in a simpler time when "nice girls" were prim and proper and didn't do it, but solid state amps and digital sources hadn't been developed yet, and a small speaker was one with a 12" woofer, so it wasn't all bad.

Subject: Re: Reluctant Virgins
Posted by Manualblock on Wed, 01 Jun 2005 20:07:25 GMT
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Oh believe me I know; "Shh! my mom is home."Too bad we bought that nice girl thing.

Subject: Re: Me Want Valve Amp. 8^)
Posted by Dave Williams on Wed, 01 Jun 2005 23:20:36 GMT
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Hi Russell,Thanks for the tip.  That Mag1515 looks like another good option to consider.  Seems hard to find any opinions from anyone who's heard it, though (other than the ones he has posted on his site).

Subject: Re: Me Want Valve Amp. 8^)
Posted by Dave Williams on Wed, 01 Jun 2005 23:25:34 GMT
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I know next to nothing about circuit topologies so can't really comment, but I did find myself, in

reading his description of the circuit, thinking that it was a freaking miracle that it worked.  Wasn't clear to me what ensures that the two phases are balanced other than fortuitous choice of some resistances.Is there something in particular about paraphase that makes you nervous about it?

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Subject: Re: Reluctant Virgins
Posted by Dave Williams on Wed, 01 Jun 2005 23:27:14 GMT
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LOL!  Now THAT'S comedy.Thanks for the laugh.

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Subject: you have plenty ov budget...
Posted by PakProtector on Fri, 03 Jun 2005 21:21:25 GMT
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I would recommend a blueprinting/restoration project. It can move into a modification and then with the same parts on to your own design.It would need good quality parts, and be versatile. There are a fair bit of choices. I'll mention some of the ones which stick out for me.A Citation II would stretch your budget a bit, a pair of Heathkit W5's would land you closer to the top by the time you have restored them. A pair of Dynaco Mk.IV would allow a bit of budget to try other things when the modification starts to happen. Eico HF 50's are going to land yo near the top of your budget limit, but have good Iron and thus potential...regards,Douglas

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Subject: Seth
Posted by PakProtector on Fri, 03 Jun 2005 21:33:45 GMT
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There are a few things to consider when looking at the Kit selection of Iron for that amp.1. single filament winding for the 2A3's. Not good if well centered cathodes/filaments are not available( and they are *NOT* )2. The phase splitting is done with an autoformer. I have not liked the sound of this sort of thing in the amps I have experimented on. A grid choke, functioning like a grid choke with balanced drive has worked *MUCH* better. I had a finger in the design of the MQ device, and abandoned the project. It is good on paper and the bench, but I found its sonics lacking.3. I think the S-230-Q is a better choice of output TX for class A PP 2A3's. 6k6 instead of 5k for the S-240. The 230 is not available from MQ though...neither is the 20-20 Plus series in this a-a load.4. B+ is a bit on the high side for that load if Class A bias is desired. It also seems to sound better if the operating point is a bit more conservative. Certainly the finals last longer.There is the group build forum here, if you wish to take on a project with group support.regards,Douglas

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Subject: Hey!
Posted by PakProtector on Sat, 04 Jun 2005 12:27:16 GMT
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He's sort of famous! I met him at Jonathan's '04 Tasting. He brought( among other stuff ), a nice PP EL84 amp. He's one of the folks I'd recommend w/o hesitation. I did suggest that he wasn't charging enough for his gear.I think I'll see if I can't get him to upgrade his line to a big PP 300B kit, or perhaps an E-Linear EL34/6550. Good to see a means of contacting him!regards,Douglas