
Subject: Reviews Versus Personal Taste

Posted by [Azuri](#) on Sun, 25 Aug 2013 16:43:54 GMT

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I remember it took me about 5 years and 3 systems before I realized the difference. I went by reviews to choose a system only to realize it didn't suit my musical tastes well. From there, I could tell what system would work best for me based on what I wanted, not by what reviews said were the best.

So, how long did it take you?

Subject: Re: Reviews Versus Personal Taste

Posted by [Thermionic](#) on Fri, 30 Aug 2013 23:48:42 GMT

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It took me several years to realize it, except it was with guitar amplification and pro sound gear instead of home audio. Before I began building my own gear, I'd spent many thousands of dollars and loads of frustration buying equipment based on reviews, before I finally realized what was going on.

By a "strange coincidence," the products that got the best reviews were ALWAYS made by the huge companies with 2 or 3 full-page color ads per magazine issue, and never the small fry, Mom and Pop companies with a black and white 1" x 3" ad hidden in the classifieds section in the back pages. Even more odd was the fact that professionals always seemed to use the Mom and Pop stuff with the so-so reviews, and not the big brand stuff that was hyped to the moon. Hmmm.....

Years later, I met a staff editor of a publishing company that produced half a dozen of the nation's biggest pro sound and musician's equipment magazines, who verified my suspicions as indeed being standard industry practice. He explained how reviews are commonly biased by how much the company spends on advertising. He cited an example where a new staff member turned in a rather unfavorable review to the senior editor, who reminded him that the product's maker spent about \$25,000 per month on advertising in their publications, and ordered him to rewrite his review accordingly.

On the flip side of that coin, he said that superior products from small companies who can't afford that kind of advertising will normally get positive (but not too positive) reviews, but NEVER the gushing, giddy, over-the-top, cartwheels and somersaults reviews the big dogs get, so as not to offend them.

Thermionic

Subject: Re: Reviews Versus Personal Taste

Posted by [Chicken](#) on Sun, 01 Sep 2013 13:09:58 GMT

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Thermionic, I can't say I'm surprised by your comments. I'm disheartened, but not surprised. I bet that new staff member was not happy about having to change his opinion either.

Subject: Re: Reviews Versus Personal Taste

Posted by [gofar99](#) on Sun, 01 Sep 2013 22:29:33 GMT

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Hi, I see a few buried messages in this thread so far. First if something is really played up....it probably is hype. If it is reviewed in a more subdued manner it might be marginal, but then again it could well be quite good. Another message is trust your ears. Even good equipment might not be to your tastes. Get stuff you like to hear, not just stuff that is reviewed well.

The issue reminds me of a personal experience about 2 years ago. As most of you are aware I am the designer and co-owner of Oddwatt Audio. We considered submitting some equipment to a leading hi-fi magazine for their evaluation. They didn't want any until either we had 5 or more dealers or would advertise in their publication. We figured we were doing well enough not to need anything from them. Being small has some advantages. No board of directors telling us what to produce. No personal and payroll sections. Can make products we like and deal with special requests with minimal fuss.

Subject: Re: Reviews Versus Personal Taste

Posted by [Thermionic](#) on Wed, 04 Sep 2013 03:07:42 GMT

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Sounds about right, for sure. Back when I was in the business, about 6 or 7 years ago, I was warned by a fellow audio entrepreneur to NEVER submit product to a certain online audio magazine for review. This gentleman knew their dirty deeds first hand, as he himself had been the victim of them.

They had just recently reviewed a product that used a particularly unusual tube type, which we'll call "Product B." Well, it just so happened that the gentleman mentioned above was probably the only other commercial builder offering a similar product using the same tube type. We'll call his "Product A" as it was actually on the market first.

The review claimed that the four staff reviewers unanimously agreed that Product B was vastly superior in every way to Product A in their A-B listening tests. He found this very strange, as he had no recollection of ever providing them with any product for review, much less that one. He looked back through his records, and indeed hadn't. He then contacted each of his customers who had purchased that particular product and inquired whether they had lent it out to anyone for any reason, or if they even knew any of the staff reviewers. The answers were "no" and "no" from each customer.

A friend of the gentleman's who was a detective began doing some research on the side. Among

other things, he found the owner of the magazine had been fired from a certain audio publication for soliciting bribes in exchange for (you guessed it!) writing superior reviews of their products.

Just a few weeks later I received several e-mails from that magazine requesting I submit product for review. I never responded.

Interestingly, shortly after that I was contacted by an individual about modifying a certain product he'd bought based on a glowing, phenomenal review by said magazine. He was very disappointed to find that it sounded quite awful, and wanted to know what could be done with it, if anything. Upon hearing it, I agreed with him wholeheartedly, and dubbed it as definitely being one of the two worst sounding pieces of tube gear I've ever heard in my life. It was beyond horrible, to say the least; an awful circuit design built with awful junk. I ended up gutting it down to the bare chassis and building a whole new circuit from the ground up.

Thermionic

Subject: Re: Reviews Versus Personal Taste
Posted by [Round2](#) on Tue, 08 Oct 2013 23:20:24 GMT
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What everyone is saying here is sad but I'm hardly surprised. Money tends to move things to the top and that relates to a lot of things not just audio equipment. It is really disappointing when you are looking for honest reviews and realize that some of these reviews are a bit over the top. I like reviews where there is a mix of negative and positives, since not everyone has the same taste.

You are right Azuri, it did take a while before I realized the sound I liked and the way I listen to music was not always the same as everyone else, this includes family members.

Subject: Re: Reviews Versus Personal Taste
Posted by [Nymeria](#) on Wed, 09 Oct 2013 12:53:21 GMT
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Money talks. It's hard not to be cynical when you hear about or personally experience incidents like these. I prefer to get reviews from trusted friends or forums like this one.

Subject: Re: Reviews Versus Personal Taste
Posted by [Gentry](#) on Thu, 10 Oct 2013 14:42:12 GMT
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I agree, Nymeria. None of our tastes are the same. We all like slightly different tones and mixes when we are listening to audio. When I am asking someone's opinion it is usually for the quality of the make up of the product. Is it a quality build? Will it last? Who better to ask than the people right here whom I have come to trust.
