Subject: The Blind Leading the Blind
Posted by AudioFred on Thu, 29 Aug 2013 16:22:18 GMT
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Is it just me, but almost every time I post something about a new project on certain other audio forums I will get some unsolicited advice from somebody whose expertise consists entirely of what other people have posted. I understand the desire to be helpful, but shouldn't people post a disclaimer like this "It is ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY that you brace the enclosure as shown on the xyz audio web site! I know this because I read it on that site).

Subject: Re: The Blind Leading the Blind
Posted by AudioFred on Thu, 29 Aug 2013 16:31:32 GMT
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For those who aren't aware of this psychological disorder, it's called Audio Fundamentalism. The Audio Fundamentalist believes a speaker must be built exactly a certain way of it will sound like shit. The most common varieties are open back fundamentalists and full range single drive fundamentalists, followed by horn fundamentalists. There are also a few lots-of-small-subwoofers-distributed-randomly-around-the-room fundamentalists. Their beliefs are based entirely on faith in the written word, because they know nothing about science.

This should not be confused with the people who actually build and sell the above types of speakers. They are almost entirely professionals who actually understand speaker design and have chosen to specialize in a certain type of speaker, but they do not deny the qualities of the types of speakers they don't offer.

Subject: Re: The Blind Leading the Blind
Posted by Wayne Parham on Thu, 29 Aug 2013 20:15:41 GMT
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You're so right, Fred. I know of three audio discussion boards in particular that are just terrible about that.

I've seen guys on those sites that entered the hobby just a few years ago, and couldn't even spell loudspeaker at the time. One year later they're experts and by three years, they are adamant that they know everything. Never mind the fact that their day job is completely non-technical and they don't have even a passing understanding.

Not sure I'd call 'em "audio fundamentalists" though. I see that same kind of personality on car and motorcycle websites too. I think I'd probably use another name for them, but you're a much nicer guy than I am.

Subject: Re: The Blind Leading the Blind
Posted by gofar99 on Thu, 29 Aug 2013 23:08:35 GMT
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Hi All, Been there and run into that too. You would be surprised how often I get advice on why my amps can't work. It has become rather comical. There are 100's of amps out there that prove the adviser wrong and you would think that would stop the comments...nope. The worst kind are the ones that have run some sort of simulation on them. They are absolutely convinced the sim is right and the whole world is misguided. If I had a dollar for every one of the it can't work or it will sound like s%%t comments I could by an expensive new turntable. As it is, I just politely suggest that they build one (or buy one) and see for themselves and try to prove me wrong. Wayne is right...I have seen it vehicles, TVs, cameras, phones ...you name it.

In the mean time, I think I'll go back to my listening room and listen to my gear that can't possibly work.

Subject: Re: The Blind Leading the Blind
Posted by Thermionic on Sat, 31 Aug 2013 01:17:10 GMT
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I used to get that same thing, Bruce, and it really chaps my backside. Some of these people don't know the first thing about how a tube circuit works in the first place, but they'll always believe it's their mission in life to prove you wrong, using information from equally inexperienced and ill-informed self-proclaimed "gurus" (who shall remain nameless, as most have far larger legal teams than I do).

I've personally chatted with some highly regarded "tube amp gurus" whose names were spoken in reverent, hushed tones by many, that didn't know the first thing about the concept of separate AC and DC conditions, much less how the tube uses them to produce an increased amplitude copy of the input signal across its load. They didn't understand mu, Gm, and Rp and how they interact in a triode, let alone how a beam tube or pentode works. They didn't know anything about how to design a simple grounded cathode stage, much less something like a LTP phase inverter. They were completely clueless about impedance, reactance, slew rate, Miller Effect, operating class, load lines, etc, because everything they do is strictly by the seat of the pants, through trial and error. What they did know was plenty of wive's tales, urban myths, and voodoo hoodoo, like:

The only good sounding output transformers have kraft paper bobbins and interlayer insulation, not synthetic materials like nylon, Kapton, Nomex, Teflon, etc.

Only amps wired with vintage-type waxed cotton wire can sound good.

All capacitors, resistors, etc, of the same value sound the same, because they measure the same with a handheld DMM.

The correct way to adjust the bias of a grid-biased amp is _____ (fill in the blank here with any one of around ten incorrect methods).

If it's grid biased, it's Class AB. If it's cathode biased, it's Class A.

This is a very short, abbreviated list, that I could add to for at least an hour. I'd say that for every truth you read or hear, there are at least ten falsehoods out there. One of the worst places this happens is in the guitar amp realm. Example: several years ago, I went into a music store and noticed there was a blackface Fender Princeton sitting on the bench in the back. The guy said he'd just recapped the power supply, then started talking some of the craziest stuff I've ever heard. I kept quiet, smiled politely, and didn't say anything until he said, "Did you know you should always bring even brand new caps up on a Variac to form them up?"

Having been asked a direct question and expected to respond, I did. I explained how electrolytic caps are manufactured with pre-formed foil (or else they would be dead shorted, duh!) and then "repair formed" before leaving the factory, by having a voltage applied to heal up any spots where the oxide film was damaged when the foils were wound.

His brow furrowed, his nose wrinkled and his lips curled downward. He rather huffily let me know I was wrong, because a certain "guru" had said it in one of his books, and that I needed to get his book so I could learn how to do things "the right way." He then mentioned two other "gurus" and their books, that he obviously regarded as the greatest masters of the tube amplifier who ever lived. These three particular "gurus" are the three most hated men on the face of planet Earth by your highly knowledgeable, old school "real deal" guitar amp techs. The reason is that those three men have spread more nonsense and foolishness about tube amps than all the others put together.

One of these three stopped by a friend's music store several years ago. He was wanting my friend to take on a dealership with him, and had some of his amplifiers on hand. My friend noticed on the rear panel of the amp that the rated power output was only a few watts, so he asked if it was a Class A amp. Mr. Guru replied, "Oh yeah, it's Class A all the way. Everything in it is the best stuff money can buy."

Yep, Mr. Guru didn't even know what Class A operating class was! My friend was dumbfounded to the point of silence. He paused a bit, then began to pick Mr. Guru's brain to see just what else he didn't know. Turns out, Mr. Guru didn't have the first clue about how tube amps even worked, even though he has a very well known book on tube amps ascribed to his authorship! The book is chock full of misinformation and incorrect tech info, but more than anything else it's laden with advertising hype for his bogus products. Still, nearly every guitar amp tech has it (even the good ones) because it contains tons of cool old amplifier pics and a comprehensive library of vintage amp schematics. But, there's still way more knowledge in it than Mr. Guru had, and my friend later found out the name of the person who had actually written the book.

This "guru" is a self-proclaimed "defender of the faith" when it comes to tubes, and is credited as one of the men who saved the tube amplifier from its demise. Truth is, just before he started his company, he'd worked as head of sales and marketing for a company that made only solid state amps, and adamantly proclaimed the vast superiority of their solid state bass guitar amps to a main competitor's tube bass amps, which BTW are still regarded over 35 years later as among the best sounding bass amps ever made. And, 35 years later, his own company's amplifiers are still regarded as some of the worst.....

He also once claimed on a forum that the critical ingredient behind the highly coveted guitar tone on a certain album was special tubes bought from his company. The problem with that is the undeniable fact that the album was recorded around two years before Mr. Guru ever started his company, back when he was with the solid state amplifier company..... AFAIK, he has not made this claim any more, after several people caught him in the lie and spoke up.

Like the other two, this guy's a quack when it comes to tube circuits but a master at deceptive marketing. Well, maybe they're not exactly masters....I had to laugh when I once saw the schematic of another one's particular amplifier model, that was an original vintage Fender schematic with no changes made whatsoever except that the Fender name and model had been removed and replaced with his!

Myself, I must've had a hundred guitar players tell me they want me to do such and such to their amp in such and such way because they read it in one of those guys' books. My response is always "If you don't think I know what I'm doing, then why did you bring it to me? You need to take it to somebody else." AAAARRRRRGGGGHHHHH!

Thermionic

Subject: Re: The Blind Leading the Blind
Posted by gofar99 on Sat, 31 Aug 2013 03:54:05 GMT
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Hi, Sure got you wound up... Anyhow I have run into the same thing with books. I used to do work on PCs and would read all the text books on them. Then I started to discover errors. The more I read the more errors I found. Finally I gave on the experts and did things the way they should be. I moved on to (actually back to) audio. At first I thought that many of the reference materials were pretty good. Same thing happened. Errors all over the place. I have a few pretty good reference materials now and do refer to them from time to time, but the things I design now are radically different from any that most folks would find in texts. It seems that a vast majority of the current crop of valve audio gear is stuck in 1970. True there was some pretty good stuff then, but we can do better now. I get a real hoot out of folks that ask me (rather regularly I might add) about a well know design that was popular in the late 60's. I generally say it is not too bad if you get rid of about 2/3 the parts. As for guitar amps...wow. I designed my first about 6 months ago. I got huge amounts of generally non-specific guidance. Some was good, much was hearsay. So I went my own way and designed what would seem to do the job. I took the prototype to the LASF having never heard it play. A number of folks there played it. A few comments were sufficient. One guy said he could never really like either his Fender or Marshal after just a few minutes on the one I brought. Very easy to set up and play. Super clean channel. Can do nearly anything. The only negative comments were related to the fact it is about 6 months to a year away from being an Oddwatt product. There were people that wanted to put a deposit on ones without even a fixed (but will not be either real costly or cheap) cost estimate. So much for the "experts" in that field. See now you got me going. Gads.

Anyhow have a great weekend.

Subject: Re: The Blind Leading the Blind
Posted by AudioFred on Sat, 31 Aug 2013 23:37:27 GMT
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I call them "Audio Fundamentalists" because they remind me of certain people who come to your house uninvited and, in an overbearing way, tell you what you're supposed to believe about religion, namely that theirs is right and all the others are wrong. Then when you test the depth of their theological knowledge with a few simple questions all they can do is repeat the script they were told to memorize.

My response to the Audio Fundamentalists is always the same, a polite "thank you for the information". After all, they mean well, and it's really not their fault. The deepest form of ignorance is being unconsciously incompetent, where one is so incompetent he doesn't have command of even the most basic information that would let him know he's incompetent.

Now, Thermionic, what are these capacitor thingies you were talking about? Do they go in tubes or something like that?

Subject: Re: The Blind Leading the Blind
Posted by gofar99 on Sun, 01 Sep 2013 22:36:56 GMT
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Capacitor Thingies.... wow they would sure be handy in some of my projects. But only if they are gold plated with titanium casings.