

Ayon Audio Spitfire

Integrated amp with single-ended triode

Who wants to build tube amplifiers today, first searches the internet. Here hobbyists and do-it-yourselfies are bustling. And they often publish historical circuit diagrams: mostly in push-pull but also gladly in the royal discipline as single-ended design. With some clicks only you get the desired diagram. The catch: you only copy existing designs, there are rarely any innovations.

No copies, only originals

Therefore Ayon takes a completely different approach: here they really start from scratch designing a new circuitry with a highly innovative input. No copy, only originals with future prospects.

This way also the Ayon Spitfire was created. It is the little brother of the Ayon Crossfire and for Ayon the entry into the world of the AA62B-triode.

You cannot get this tube at the dealer “just around the corner”. Factually only Ayon disposes of this treasure thanks to a stroke of luck: one snapped at the chance at the best moment, when parts of the Czech Tesla factory were for sale. Now, Ayon produces here the in-house AA62 as a monopolist.

They are extraordinary big glowing bulbs requiring a relatively low voltage – for a single-ended design. The goal: revitalize the legendary sound properties of a 300B. With the AA62 from the outset being designed for music but not borrowed from the world of transmitter triodes.

Everything in front of and around it is comparatively conventional. To the AA62B Ayon arranges a couple of 6H30 and another pair of 12AU7 both from Russian origin. The whole, of course, follows the rules of the game of a classical class A-design – without negative feedback. Therefore the Spitfire amp should be placed relatively airy to avoid heat accumulation. But this is already pretended by the bulky design. The tubes are enthroned on a top plate with power transformers, proudly putting a total of 36 kg on the scale.

This is a real power plant even when a double 30 watts output does not seem so much. During our test run we did not encounter a loudspeaker which could not be driven by this amp.

Adequately the workmanship is superb. It's fun to operate the controls. The rich ticktack at the source selection, a volume control by fixed resistors – here no simple potentiometer was installed. Fine also the top-inserted dial instrument for exact bias adjustment.

Highly analytic sound

All this has a steep price: Ayon asks 8,750 Euro for this amp. But is this a reasonable equivalent value to the audible?

From the first bars on we were fascinated. This amp provides a delicious highly analytic sound without the chill of some solid-state amps. To this extent we do not know it neither from other single-ended triodes. With them sometimes there is something dull resonating: a noble shadow of velvet softening the brilliance. Nothing of this with the Ayon, it had draught, pressure, brilliance. Exactly the values that Karajan established in his old age phase as prerequisite. His recording of “Turandot” is an extreme example. The strings of the Vienna Philharmonic are whirring, the brass cuts its paths, the voices of the singers seem close to the edge of bigger-than-real. In addition an extreme difference between fortissimo and pianissimo. Actually this recording cannot be reproduced correctly – at that time Karajan wanted an un-realizable optimum.

Particular flair

Here the Spitfire appears almost as the sheet anchor. It has a particular flair for dynamics and reproduction. During our test run the whole dimension of the sound orchestration was shown. Intensely first of all the fine resolution of the strings. Often there is talking about the golden gloss of the strings of the Vienna Philharmonic – rarely you can hear it from a sound recording. Here, however, the magic arose. Additionally the fine dealing of dynamic interrelations: The Ayon allowed for tremendous dynamic differences without letting appear the fortissimo of the brass too harsh nor purring disembodied in the pianissimo.

An amp of extraordinary high-definition

Intense also the reproduction of spatial details. For example, we had asked the Oscar Peterson Trio for a live concert. The Ayon love the presence of the small jazz-club: deliciously precise it positioned drums, bass, and piano in a compact room. Finely articulated thereto the remarks of the audience. Altogether it proved to be an amp of extraordinary high-definition with plenty of air and plasticity in the reproduction.

What's missing? Nothing.

There is neither an obvious nor a hidden deficiency. Especially the output convinced us. The Ayon revved even speakers as tall as a man difficult to drive.

We didn't need think much: to the overall very good rating a "Highlight" reward is added.