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SPOTLIGHT BRYSTON 4B CUBED

Hardly any other amplifier can look back to such a long product history as the Bryston 4B amplifier, which was first introduced in 1976. Let's repeat it again, yes in 1976! Only its little sister the Bryston 3B, which has been available even longer, and the likewise legendary Naim NAP 250 can look back at a similarly long family tree.



Naturally with the actual 4B3 (the raised three stands for "cubed") merely the basic concept was maintained over the years: the consistent dual mono construction (including two transformers), high class A operation (the first five percent of its rated output are presented in this prominent beneficial mode), as well as balanced amplifier circuitry, furthermore a 4B amplifier always provides output in high three digit range. Thanks to the stability of the 4B amplifiers they are now as before the choice when it's a matter of operating so-called difficult to drive loudspeakers. According to Bryston its

present incarnation of the 4B amplifier, i.e. the 4B3, provides 300 Watts into 8 Ohm, 500 Watts into 4 Ohms, and in bridged mode actually 900 Watts into 8 Ohms. Hence quickly the suspicion might arise that a 4B amplifier “cannot function properly because of all its might”, and that in a musical sense it might go to work coarsely rather than gently, but exactly that is, and was, never the case, quite the opposite: The quality of a Bryston power amplifier especially demonstrates that it can also harmonize with high efficiency loudspeakers. This makes them equally admired by “soft listeners” as well as by those who operate well known capricious loudspeakers.

However the Canadians did not only change the outside, now with a more appealing pleasing design, but they once more took a very close look at the input stages. By means of a new patented circuit, chief engineer Christopher Russel and his team, reduced the distortion of the input stage to under one thousands of one percent. This looks a bit like the data fetishism of decades ago, in which one cheered for every additional zero after the decimal point, but one needs to be aware that no matter how miniscule the distortion in the input stage, it will be ruthlessly amplified by the further-on stages and can audibly affect the output signal.

The features of the new 4B3 amplifier remained the same as the previous versions. One can choose between balanced and unbalanced inputs, as well as the amplification factor in two steps to the loudspeakers, the preamp, and one’s own listening preferences. The 4B3 amplifier is available in black or silver, with 17 inch or 19 inch front panels, with or without handles. Fortunately, just as before, there is a warranty of twenty (!) years, which includes replacement parts, labor, and return shipping to the owner.

The fundamental revision, especially of the input stage, has quite clearly borne comprehensible audible fruit. A raised transparency is noticeable, which enables individual sound events a plus in spatiality and tone colors. At the same time one notices less superficial effects, voices for example do not become monstrous, but are depicted believably large and lifelike. In order to mention at least one listening example: Already since eternity I use the recording of Carl Orff’s “Die Kluge” (The Smart One) with the Radio Symphony Orchestra Leipzig under the direction of Herbert Kegel for the tonal evaluation of components.

With the “Cubic” 4B, despite having heard this recording a thousand times, I actually rediscovered it anew in nuances. The Bryston 4B3 offers a large

stretched out stage, voices are easier to understand, and the soft fading away of many various instruments succeeds with much more nuance than with my own 3BSST amp.

All that said, is the Bryston 4B3 amplifier the best 4B amplifier of all times? Yes, it is that without a doubt according to my opinion! Above and beyond that it is one of the best power amplifiers that one can purchase for love or money. The next 40 years can arrive!

Translated from the German by Peter Ullman