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PASSION FOR SOUND

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Icon Audio Stereo 845 PP

To maximise its power potential, the Stereo 845 runs in push-pull mode, telling us that it is not one of the more specialist, far-out valve amplifiers. The Stereo 845, however, is a valve amplifier designed to fight it out in a modern solid-state world; you won't need to change your speakers or suddenly start listening to simple acoustic music with no bass to keep it happy.

The Stereo 845 follows Icon Audio's general best practice – which means a rigid steel chassis into which good quality low distortion, tertiary wound output transformers are bolted, and these are potted to reduce noise. High quality passive components are used throughout, including Solen/SCR capacitors, with the option of Jensen copper foils. Silver-plated copper internal wiring (all hand wired, point to point) is used, along with a Japanese-sourced ALPS volume control. As well as the four PsVane 845 valves, two 6SL7 first stage valves and two 6SN7 output driver valves are used, along with a GZ34 driver stage rectifier.

Sound quality

It might not come as a total surprise to learn that the Stereo 845 is warm sounding, although in fairness it's never gloopy and syrupy, with a bass like it is walking through treacle. Instead it is fast and lithe, but still has

a vast thump down south, seeming like the audio equivalent of a JCB. It's pleasingly sumptuous but never sounds overblown in a well balanced system. For example, the walking bassline on Black Uhuru's *Party Next Door* is a delight with our reference Sonus faber loudspeakers doing a passable impersonation of a PA stack at Glastonbury.

Moving up to the midband, and the Stereo 845 doesn't lose much warmth, although it does dry up slightly.

Everything gets a nice, rosy glow, meaning that recordings that were previously viewed as a little acerbic suddenly seem to calm down and chill out. There's never any sense of the sound being laser etched out right in front of you; instead you're drawn into this wide and deep soundstage, with a lot of the action going on behind the plane of the speakers. Things hang back a little, yet it is so expansive that you still feel quite immersed in the proceedings.

It's a lovely sound, no matter what sort of music you like. It gives a beautiful clarity and ease to even some of the most uneasy human voices – like Bob Dylan's for example. *Highway 61 Revisited* is a lot less strident than normal. There's no doubt that this is a wonderful power valve to have driving your speaker cones; it's so clean yet warm in a way that almost no other valves are. Yes, like lesser tubes it is coloured, but it's

DETAILS

PRICE
£5,995

ORIGIN
UK/China

WEIGHT
35kg

DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
440 x 240 x 400mm

FEATURES

- Quoted power 2x 38W RMS (8ohms)
- Class A triode front end, push pull output
- 4x 845, 2x 6SL7, 2x 6SN7, 1x GZ34 valves
- Power amplifier direct option

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REVIEWED
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far more resolute and detailed sounding, and doesn't make the music descend into some sort of audio comfort blanket.

The treble is lovely. Suddenly, cymbals played through even a top quality Class A solid-stater like the Musical Fidelity AMS35i seem a bit steely and scratchy. Also, they don't time as well; the filagree hi-hat work on Rush's *Subdivisions* sounds more like it's being played on a drum machine on lesser amps, whereas the Stereo 845 seems to flatter the sound of both Neil Peart's vast drum kit and his playing. The Icon Audio has an easy sound – rather like a large Harley Davidson motorcycle, it just never seems to break into a sweat. No matter how complex the music gets, it just shrugs it off and keeps playing.

Conclusion

Even at high volumes, the Stereo 845 displays grace under pressure in practically any living room. It sounds powerful and assured – you just can't push it as far as a solid-stater. It oozes character and its own unique charm – making a sound that virtually no other amplifier can •

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY



LIKE: Fat, sumptuous, silky sound; power

VALUE FOR MONEY



DISLIKE: Nothing, if this is your thing

BUILD QUALITY



WE SAY: Magnificent, mellifluous sounding and mad!

FEATURES



OVERALL

