

NEW AUDIO FRONTIERS SUPREME 300B

I would have never thought that one day, I would have tested a 300B amplifier. Not for any reason at all, but for those electrostatic vampires I have, that simply put such an amplifier choice at the antipodes of what my needs actually suggest.. To move toward that direction, I was gently persuaded by Maurizio Zanichelli, New Audio Frontiers owner, whom after having put to the test the extraordinary 845 SE (see AR253) - which caused a sort of mystical crisis (who would have ever thought that a single 845 could ever drive the Audiostatic?)-tried to raise the bar by proposing an even less powerful amp; we were already at the lower limit with the 845 amp, what sense at all could have had a test presumably based on listening string quartets?

Eventually we came down to a good compromise by deciding to run the listening session at one of my friends' house, Nunzio, a great fan of New audio Frontiers sound whom, above all, owns a much more suitable pair of Sonus Faber Guarneri Homage; moreover Nunzio also owns a couple of vintage power amps, which are comparable to the Supreme 300B, being

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equipped with a pair of 300Bs; We succeeded in convincing Nunzio to allow us to occupy his living room with this more than 45 Kgs heavy beast. However, as price to pay for this favour, I had to give to Nunzio my fantastic New audio Frontiers preamplifier, The Absolute (see AR 209). I originally intended to test The 300B New audio Frontiers using this preamplifier; unfortunately, due to a misunderstanding, I received the integrated rather than the power amp.

Well, never mind at all, simply two new challenges for me rather than one.

The High Level integrated is not such a popular product as typically, the first upgrading step in one's audiophile carrier is just to replace the Integrated amp with separates; By the way I remember an amusing article



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written by Toni Jop, some ten years ago; The High level integrated can therefore be considered as a sort of side, alternative path for well experienced audiophiles, or simply the best solution to go for where available room or budget set the limits.; as a matter of fact, if you do not need any phono stage, the high level integrated generally offers a quality to price ratio which is simply unreachable to a preamp-power amp combo, but... is there any chance at all to convince audiophiles.....

Back to the point, we are talking here about an atypical amplifier, if compared to classic 300B tube based designs. Mono Triode fans will already be suspicious by now because of the use of two tubes per channel rather than one. Let us hope they will keep on reading this article anyway, as I suspect that as soon as they will discover that these tubes are wired in push pull fashion, they might really want to kill me for good!

And I'm just telling this to Maurizio who does not lose his aplomb at all however by firmly replying : did you really think that I would have spent time and energy into designing an amp just like so many others already in place; go and read the tech specs, just to learn that this amp features more than just one atypical characteristic.

Obeying to Maurizio I go ahead and read the tech Specs and...I must admit he's right; but let us go with order.

Let us start by telling you that, apart from the power supply circuit, this amps's circuitry is completely dual mono; power supply features inductive-capcitanace pi-greco filtering while Rectification is carried out by two 5U4G tubes, one per channel; heaters power supply is rectified too and regulated.

Volume control uses a blue, motorized ALPS; yes, you also get a remote control. The input preamplifying stage is based on one E83CC per channel, which is followed by one 5687 tube per channel driver stage.

One more atypical feature at this point is that driver to power tubes coupling, uses interstage transformers.

This is not a new solution being already adopted by the most esoteric Japanese designers but certainly is

the most expensive solution to go with. By the way let me remind you that high quality transformers is to New audio Frontiers designers and to me as well, a key point into developing high quality amplifiers.

New audio Frontiers Iso highlights his transformers high building quality, which happen to find application in New audio Frontiers The Abolute preamplifier's output stages too.

By directly questioning them concerning said design aspect, New audio Frontiers replies that on the basis of extended listening sessions, they found out that usage of interstage transformers, apart from inherent technical advantages offered by such solution (not to mention lower floor noise), also bring spectacular benefits to three dimensional sound stage re proposition; and as far as I am concerned, I must say that at the end of long listening sessions I do agree with them.

To complete our technical overview, circuitry does not make use of any feedback at all, Bias adjustment is automatic, output transformers use silver litz wires. As a result, we end up with a Class A, 18 Watt per channel amplifier capable of driving speakers at least

90 dB efficient.



From an aesthetical perspective this product recalls typical New audio Frontiers retro style with fine wooden side panels, copper front panel, buttons and labeling that all together seem to be willing to provide us with an idea of New audio Frontiers peculiar sound character, warm but not euphonic.; a very robust construction indeed with no compromises. Let me tell you that building level is extremely high and has nothing to share with some artisanal products that simply leave me rather perplexed.

Straight to listening and soon we find confirmations to our expectations. We plug The Supreme 300B into a higher quality playback system, at least in term of overall price, and yet, our Supreme performs extremely well; surely, even if our Supreme comes equipped with the best 300B currently available - golden pins

300Bs from Golden Dragon - the exquisite timbre of vintage Western Electric is simply irresistible; however, we must also consider that if we were ever able to find a quartet of truly original WE 300Bs, we would pay a price much higher than our amp itself.; It is a comparison which surely does not have any sense at all but, I really want to see clear and disobey both to Maurizio, whom I promised not to make any mess by mixing tubes, and to Nunzio, who is certainly not happy at all at the idea of being momentarily departed by his costly WE 300Bs. So I swap Nunzio's WE 300Bs tubes with NAF Golden Dragon 300Bs. The Automatic Bias sets Tubes straight into correct operation on both amps. After a mere 5 minutes, right before Nunzio starts losing his calm, however just enough to understand and say that the Supreme 300B, if equipped with the same quality tubes (we 300 Bs in our test) would easily challenge a pair of MonoBlocks that, if still in production, would cost at least twice (and you would also need to add a preamplifier).

Generally speaking whenever I had any chance to listen to 300B based amplification systems, I always encountered lack of dynamics, speed and soundstage reproduction. Typical mono triodes tend to reproduce a Bonsai-like image, the usual Presepe-like (miniaturized scene) effect as I use to say just to get angry the most

excited monodiode fans, an image presentation which is simply too far away from my personal tastes; the Supreme seems to maintain something of the muscular strength of 845 tube; as a matter of fact, sound impact and feeling to listen to live music, just recalls to my memory the 845SE amp. Besides naturalness and neutrality characteristics we would expect from such type of amp, here we also experience a not so common matic sound, not to mention an extraordinary transient response. We also appreciate here undistorted dynamic peaks in spite of modest power output (merits go to over sized power supply circuit); But what really strikes me and leave me enthusiast is the sound stage, so life real. I would tend to give merits in this case to the push pull tube configuration, not forgetting, at the same time those inter stage transformers. Needless to say that the most moving experiences will come when listening to voice, which will allow us appreciate timbral accuracy and neutrality along with stunning physical sound presence.

To end with, we have here an outstanding product; maybe not completely to the taste of those typical 300B lovers, that I would anyway warmly invite to listen to the Supreme with no preconceptions. As far as I am concerned, I can only regret impossibility to listen to the 300 B power amp version driven by the

Absolute preamplifier, a match from which it would be quite easy, by now, to expect even better results. In short: Strongly recommended.

New Audio Frontiers confirms to be one of the best Italian manufacturers: few products kept in catalogue for years, excellent post sales technical assistance, stunning technical and aesthetical building. If we want, a core focused mind set company.



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