

Column by Renzo van Riemsdijk (Masterenzo): Older HiFi amps, part 2

In this month's column I will elaborate on why I'm a big fan of older (vintage) HiFi amplifiers.

To be frank I find it hard to explain exactly why I like them, but I'll give it a try.

An old amp is like an old man (or woman) with lots of life experience and knowledge. Wisdom comes with age.

With gear this works quite the same. When properly serviced, vintage equipment can be very valuable because of their unique sound. It's not without reason that large amounts of money are paid for vintage equipment from the glory days of pop music in the previous century.

The condition of the equipment is a key element here. Nobody in HiFi or studio-land gets excited over poorly performing vintage equipment.

Good vintage equipment lives and it's exactly that what makes it so pleasant to listen to and to work with. It's kind of the same with the HiFi amps I use in my studio. I really like working with them but I like listening to them even more.

It's like they want to tell me a story. Each day a different one. It's a bit romanticized but I genuinely believe it works this way.

And besides: my choice for this type of amplifiers will undoubtedly be influenced by my previous career as an (electric) guitarist. For many guitarists a vintage (tube) sound is some kind of holy grail and I too look at myself as being a "tube-ish" guy.

But wait, why don't you use tube HiFi amps in the studio? Good question, here's the answer: downstairs in my living room I have a set of vintage Philips HF-309 power amps. Two mono blocks, handmade in the late sixties and each capable of delivering 6 Watts of tube power.

6 Watts seems little but trust me, once you pump up the volume and combined with the right speakers "Killing In The Name Of" by nineties cult band Rage Against The Machine can be severely loud!

Below some images from the Philips archives. Building your own HiFi equipment was normal in those days.



Philips, for hobbyists aged ten to eighty.

Bouw met **PHILIPS** - Bouw óp **PHILIPS**

Zélf bouwen is modern. Volg het voorbeeld van de duizenden zelfbouwers die u voorgingen en beleef ook het plezier van het zélf iets maken. In uw vrije tijd bouwt u een apparaat, dat in kwaliteit op een zeer hoog peil staat. Iedereen kan het. Vooral wanneer Philips u zo'n eind tegemoet komt met een serie uitgekende bouwpakketten, constructiedozen en onderdelenpakketten. Eenvoudig samen te stellen door een doordachte opbouw en overduidelijke handleidingen! Iedereen

kan bij het bouwen met Philips zeker zijn van een luisterrijk resultaat. Daarom: bouw met Philips en bouw óp Philips! Neemt u deze brochure eens door. U vindt er alle Philips bouwpakketten, bouw- en constructiedozen, onderdelenpakketten en een groot aantal luidsprekers in. En bovendien vele handige hulpmiddelen en benodigdheden die van pas kunnen komen wanneer u zélf bouwt (of gaat bouwen!)



Belangrijk voor Hi-Fi: goede luidsprekers!

Alleen een Hi-Fi versterker met minimale vervorming garandeert u nog geen echte Hi-Fi muziekweergave! De muziek komt uiteindelijk uit de luidspreker; kies daarom uw luidsprekers met zorg, bijvoorbeeld uit de kroonserie van Philips. Ideaal is de combinatie van twee of meer luidsprekers voor een gescheiden weergave van lage en hoge tonen. Gebruik daarbij een scheidingfilter uit de serie Philips onderdelenpakketten. Alle gegevens vindt u in deze brochure!

The Philips DIY kit.

So, they sound great, those Philips tube amps. But still I'm not using them for mastering. This is because they can sound absolutely great at times. But there are times that they sound somewhat *normal*. I cannot put my finger on it but to me they seem to live and just like in real life good days are alternated with less good ones. This makes them less suitable for mastering since monitoring consistency is a big thing in mastering. Your monitoring environment are the ears you listen to and rely your judging upon so it'd better be constant.

What I do use are vintage HiFi amps from the nineties, all made in Japan. First up is Mr. Sony. The TA-F570ES integrated amplifier is capable of delivering lots of power. Ideal for powering the lower bass cabinets of my custom built speaker system. Next up is Mr. Marantz, more specifically Mr. Ken Ishiwata. His rendition of the PM-66SE amplifier shines in subtlety and finesse, making it a perfect companion for the mid and high cabinets of my custom speakers. Finally there's Mr. Pioneer. The A-676 from the *Reference line* combines power with subtlety which makes it a perfect match with my Amphion Two15 speakers.

Well, I'm drooling all over right now. It's time to power up the amps and let some great music pass through them. Enjoy!

Renzo

Renzo (Masterenzo) is a Rotterdam based Dutch mastering engineer. He has worked for Bart Voncken, The Legendary Orchestra Of Love and the John F Klaver Band. More info about mastering and about Masterenzo can be found on his [website](#).