

## Column by Renzo van Riemsdijk (Masterenzo): Vintage HiFi amps

In my previous column I talked about the loudness button, found on many HiFi amplifiers. In this month's column I will elaborate on the amp itself.

Nowadays the amplifier as centerpiece of a stereo set is not as common as it used to be back in the days of music on CD, vinyl or music cassette. Many people (youngsters) listen to their music on their phone via earbuds or headphones.

But still I'd like to stand up for the HiFi amp as an important element of a stereo set. A current set looks a bit smaller than it used to in the previous century.

While music streaming services offer listening to compressed(!) music we started to listen less to physical sources like CD, vinyl and music cassette.

But thanks to the revival of vinyl and, to a lesser degree, music cassette physical music sources are on their way back to our homes. Attention and focus to actually listen to a record instead of music being a way to kill time.

Back to the chain. The chain of the centerpiece (amplifier) and sources like a CD Player, turntable and a cassette deck to deliver music to the most important piece of the chain: our loudspeakers.

There are different design options for building a HiFi amplifier. Older designs (being Class A or AB) are less efficient and generate more heat while newer designs (Class D or higher) are highly efficient, produce less heat and are much lighter in weight.

But do those newer amps sound better than vintage amps?

It's probably not a matter of better or worse. Music has everything to do with connection and musicality.

I'm not so much interested in the efficiency and weight of an amplifier. I just want it to sound good and to be able to connect music to the listener in the best possible way and vintage HiFi amps seem to deliver exactly that (at least for me).

I like the way they look and feel with their hefty weight and luscious Class A (or AB) tones. It probably has something to do with my past: I played (electric) guitar through vintage tube amps because of their rich and musical tone.

One thing must be cleared out: there's nothing wrong with a well-constructed modern Class D (or higher) amplifier. It's just that since the glory days of HiFi in the eighties and nineties many shitty built and designed amps of questionable quality have been put out on the market.

Fortunately the quality of current HiFi amplifiers is getting better again. A modern brand like Hegel produces some fine HiFi equipment. People seem to pay more attention to the actual sound quality of the music they are listening to and are more willing to invest in a decent stereo set.

In the meanwhile, have a listen to your favorite record **without** streaming compression on vinyl, CD or cassette or digital via a music streamer. You'll be amazed how good it can actually sound.

Renzo

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More info about mastering and about Masterenzo can be found on his [website](#).*