

venster op beeld en geluid

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COVER

**!PRIMEUR! KEF LS50 META
METAMORFOSE VAN EEN KLASSIEKER**

RECENSIE

ARCAM AVR30
COCKTAIL AUDIO X45 PRO
DIPTYQUE DP77
ENGLISH ELECTRIC 8SWITCH
FiiO M11 PRO
FOCAL CHORA 826
GAUDER ARCONA 60 MKII
LEAK STEREO 130 EN CDT
PRIMA LUNA EV0100i
TIGLON TPL2000A
YAMAHA A-S3200

WINKELBEZOEK

LINN WINKEL AMSTERDAM

PLAYLIST HEROES

VAN DE MEESTERS





PRIMA LUNA, BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

To get right to the point, I'm not a fan of tube amps. So when our editor-in-chief asked me to give my opinion on the PrimaLuna EVO 100 Ultra-Linear Integrated Amplifier, I had my reservations. Usually, the bass response is not the best; the amps are deliberately retro-designed, use dangerously high voltages, can be noisy, are maintenance sensitive, and you have to "play" with them until the tubes are almost worn out. In short, I don't (or rather, didn't) disagree with the usual prejudices.

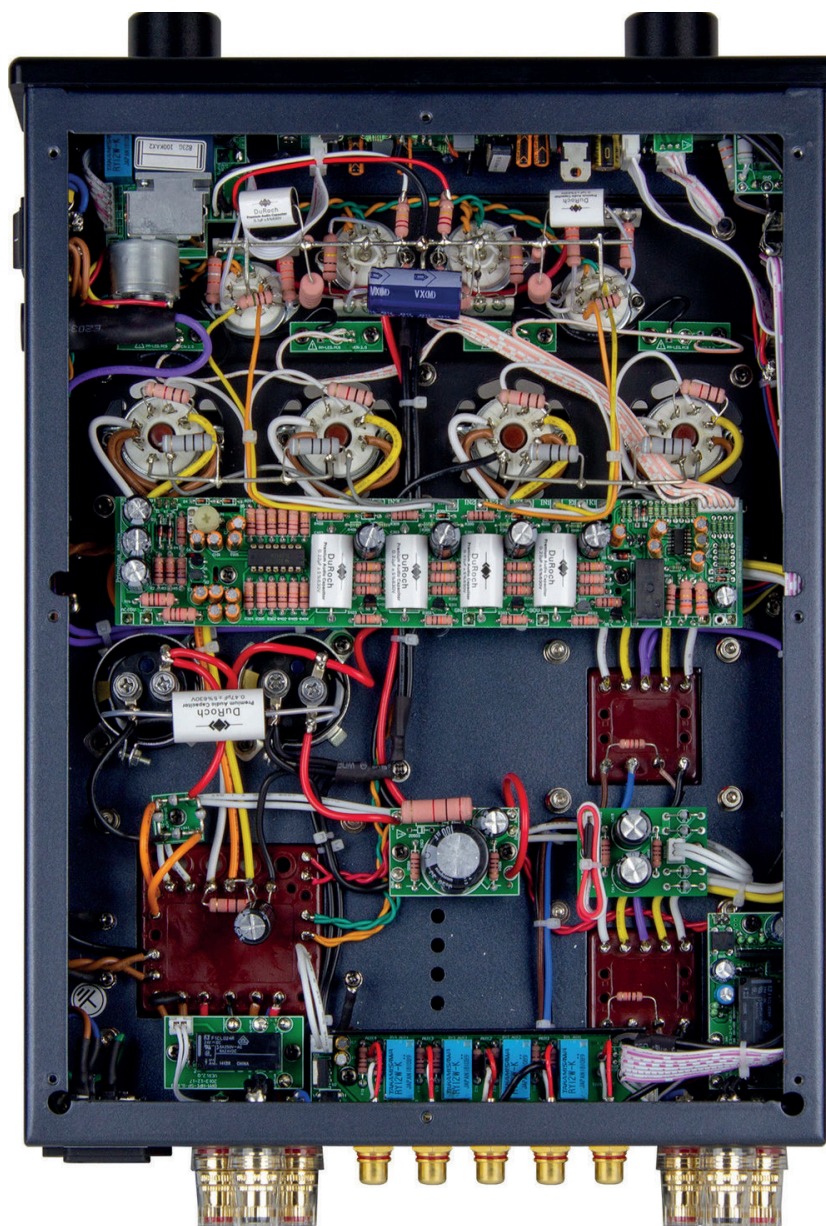
First, let's unpack it. A sturdy cardboard box in which a relatively heavy (17 kg) amplifier is packed, between heavy foam boards, with a small, elegant remote control, spare fuses, a pair of white gloves, an instruction manual, and a bag of extra rubber rings and rubber caps. The rings are for the remote control so that it won't scratch a table, and the caps are for the protective cage over the tubes. My first reaction: "Excellent, finally those tubes are well protected". After all, tubes have a glass casing, and the applied voltages are high. A minor accident can have nasty consequences. This protective cage is easily removed if you want to replace the tubes once every 2000-3000 hours. If you take this amplifier out of the box when it is new, the power tubes still have foam protectors, which can easily be removed. The tubes, by the way, are PrimaLuna Silver Label tubes. That means PrimaLuna does a 60 out of 100 pre-selection. It means that the tubes are of better than average quality without being over-selected, which improves the price/quality ratio of the tubes and, ultimately, of course, the amplifier.

As usual, I first read the instruction manual. It quickly becomes apparent that this tube amplifier is not just any tube amplifier. The first indication of this is the motorized volume control and source selection. These are not controlled with ENIAC-like tube logic but simply in a modern way. Also, for the MM preamplifier, the use of solid-state components is not a problem. This preamp is built with neat SMD (Surface Mounted Devices) components. Even the tube amplifier itself is not ashamed to use the transistorized PrimaLuna Adaptive Auto Bias, which constantly adjusts the bias and protects the output stage. This also makes it easy to swap, for example, EL34s (low bias) for KT88s (high bias). By flipping a switch on the side, you can easily choose between low and high bias. Is the switch in the wrong position? No problem, it just means that the setting was not optimal. The protection of this amplifier is exemplary and protects against everything imaginable. Soft start, OTP (Output Transformer Protection), BTI (Bad Tube Indication) and PTP (Power Transformer Protection). OK, there are limits. If you accidentally insert a tube incorrectly into a socket with considerable force, the warranty (rightly) ends. In short, this amplifier uses the best technology available to maximize the performance of a tube amplifier. As such, the PrimaLuna EVO 100 exhibits specifications that are very good for a tube amplifier.

A frequency response of 10Hz-75kHz +/- 3dB is fine, as is a signal-to-noise ratio of 90 dB. Only in terms of distortion, you do end up with a THD of 0.2% @ 1W. Of course, that's not bad because harmonic distortion in a tube amplifier is different than in a transistor amplifier. The type of distortion gives that characteristic 'warmth'. Of course, that's something you like or don't like. The amplifier cannot immediately be called efficient; of the almost 300W it consumes, about 40W per channel is available to drive a speaker. PrimaLuna indicates that a short warm-up period is sufficient and that

the amplifier does not need to be on 24 hours a day.

So I was in a surprisingly positive mood when I set up this (modern!) amplifier. The mains input is mounted with two differently coloured screws, one bare metal and one black anodized. The plain metal screw marks 'phase' and the black anodized one 'zero'. Handy if you attach importance to the 'correct' mains connection. All inputs come neatly with plastic protective caps. Connecting was easy. Here you notice again that you are dealing with a tube amplifier. There is a 4 Ohm and an 8 Ohm connection for your speakers. If you do not know that, no disaster. You are even invited to experiment to find out what you like most. And then there is music ... although, there should be music.





Silence, then. I am checking again. And then I notice that switch on the side where you can choose between speakers and headphones. It is a bit difficult to see what is meant now. So I switched it on, and yes, music!

To start in style, I played some old records on the different record players that I had available at the time. Fisher-Z (Going deaf for a living), Vandenburg ((Heading for a storm - ooh, what a lousy pressing). After that, the serious work :-).





Dali-Thirtyfive Years and Richard Strauss, Wiener Philharmoniker, Herbert von Karajan (Decca 1141/2000). All this was supplemented with CDs by Dire Straits, Chris Jones and Sara K. The critical question, of course, is how all this sounds! The answer is short but sweet: Great! This is good; this is fun! Actually, I noticed that I was looking to express myself in negative tones. But the bass was not limited, I heard no noise, I did not need my tool kit, I did not have to adjust anything, I did not have to wait ... Those prejudices were quite deep, I noticed now. And as far as this PrimaLuna is concerned, completely unjustified. As said before: This is good; this is fun!

So are there any negative things that should be mentioned? We already mentioned the switch between headphones and amplifier, which is a bit unclear (but you get used to that soon enough), and the user manual could be a bit friendlier. Oh yes, the included gloves are a bit more suitable for people with small hands. I don't have really big hands, but the gloves were tight. If you have big hands, they don't fit. In other words, this is really looking for negative things. Who is this

amplifier for? I can see this PrimaLuna EVO100i Ultra Linear integrated amplifier fitting perfectly into a modern interior. Together with a record player, a streamer and a couple of good speakers, this would be a seriously hip set. But if you are a "tube lover" who dares to step outside the dogmatic boundaries of the "real" tube sound, I wouldn't be surprised if this amplifier actually also could be a revelation. All the advantages, but not the disadvantages. OK, so I have to admit that I was indeed biased regarding tube amps in general. I am glad that this PrimaLuna shows that you can also make beautiful amplifiers with tubes, which can be used just like any other amplifier. And all that for 2,450 Euros.

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