

KEN MICALLEF

Mastersound Compact 845

INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER

Back in the '50s, Cesare Sanavio, then a new electronics graduate with a specialty in output transformers for tube amplifiers, began his career in radio and television, traveling to various locations outside his native Italy to apply his expertise. Eventually he settled in Paraguay and started designing tubed sound systems for public installations, teaching his son Luciano the art. A few years later, Sanavio and his family returned to Italy. There, he worked as a consultant to several hi-fi companies. Finally, in 1994, drawing on decades of accumulated knowledge of tube-amplifier design and manufacturing, and a particular focus on output transformers of the highest quality, Cesare Sanavio and his two sons, Luciano and Lorenzo, formed Mastersound.

When Cesare Sanavio died, Lorenzo and Luciano continued operations. In 2015, the company re-formed, with some new international business connections and a new CEO, Antonio Ferro. The company's new headquarters is in Arcugnano, a small town in the province of Vicenza. It employs six people, four in production and two in the office. Luciano is now the company's lead designer and production manager, a role previously held by Lorenzo, who has retired from such duties but remains a co-owner of the business.



The Compact 845 ran hot, and so did the music that flowed from its mighty triodes.

Today, Mastersound's stated goal is to produce tube amplifiers of the highest quality available on the market. To this end, the company hand-builds each amplifier in its own laboratory, "one by one, with extreme care,"

their "Made in Italy" webpage asserts, "using the best components" and manufacturing techniques. Mastersound output transformers are hand-wound on a mechanical winding machine in a secret, closely guarded process the company claims makes them "unique in the world."

The company's line currently includes three preamplifiers,

SPECIFICATIONS

Description Tubed integrated amplifier with single-ended, class-A output stage and auto bias. Tube complement: two Psvane HiFi Series 845B, two JJ ECC802, two TungSol 6SN7GTB. Power output: 30Wpc into 8 or 4 ohms (14.8dBW, 11.8dBW). Frequency response: 8Hz–40kHz (±0dB). Output impedance: 4, 8 ohms. Input impedance: 50k

ohms. Input sensitivity: 1.0V RMS for full output. Inputs: two pairs XLR (balanced), four pairs RCA (unbalanced). Outputs: two sets of speaker binding posts corresponding to 4 and 8 ohm transformer taps. Power consumption: 202W. Negative feedback: 0dB.

Dimensions 18.1" (460mm) W × 10.8" (275mm) H × 16.3"

(415mm) D. Weight: 75lb (35kg). **Finish** Black-anodized with black-walnut side panels. **Serial number of unit reviewed** 22439. Manufactured in Italy.

Price \$10,495. Number of US dealers: 10. Warranty: five years.

Manufacturer Mastersound SRL, Via Galileo Galilei 2/2 – 36057, Arcugnano VI, Italy.

Tel: +39-392-997-6159.

Email: info@mastersoundsas.it.

Web: mastersoundsas.it.

US distributor:

MoFi Distribution,

1811 W. Bryn Mawr Ave.,

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Web: mofidistribution.com.

which use ECC82 and ECC83 tubes; three monoblock power amplifiers utilizing 6SN7, 300B, and 845 tubes; and nine integrated amplifiers, which, variously, set ECC802, EL34, 300B, 6SN7, 845, KT120, and KT150 tubes aglow. The Compact 845 integrated (\$10,495), the subject of this review, is one of Luciano's designs.

Design

The Compact 845 is beautiful. Its stout pair of Psvane 845B HiFi Series power triodes is protected by a butterfly-like, laser-cut, anodized aluminum tube guard; its curved black-walnut side panels adorn a hefty, CNC-fabricated chassis made of antimagnetic stainless steel. The 75lb Compact 845 stands 10.8" high, 18.1" wide, and 16.3" deep, which stretches the "Compact" designation to its limit.

The sleek tube guard creates a symmetry that ties the amplifier's external components together in graceful, flowing lines. The Compact 845 is sure to draw looks and praise for its striking design.

Viewed from the front, two large aluminum knobs occupy the two sides of the faceplate: The left knob allows the user to choose among five input sources, marked CD, Tape, Tuner, Aux, and Direct; the right knob controls a motorized, Alps 50k ohm logarithmic potentiometer, one of the silkiest, most solid-feeling volume controls I've encountered—a feature I appreciated especially after learning that the lovely, wood-encased remote control didn't work.

Back-panel connections include the two pairs of RCA and XLR inputs for connection to an external preamplifier; three pairs of gold-plated RCA inputs and one pair of XLR inputs; two sets of speaker binding posts (4 and 8 ohm taps); a fuse plug, and an IEC

power connector. The XLR and RCA jacks are manufactured in Italy, by Axiomedia, as are the speaker posts. The unit sits on four robust, tall feet.

As mentioned, the output transformers are the company's *particular focus and point of pride*. In a recent email, Ferro, the CEO, elaborated. "Power and output transformer are designed and built by hand, by us, using high-quality OFC copper cable and grain-oriented sheet metal. Our transformers have EI-type cores. Each amplifier has its own dedicated power and output transformer, designed especially to obtain the maximum performance from the tubes used. Our output transformers have a unique design that permits a very large bandwidth and allows us to zero the feedback, with enormous benefit to the naturalness of the sound."

The Compact 845 includes custom capacitors by Italian firm ICEL. Why custom? They're "made for us in polypropylene," Ferro wrote, "because this type allows much better insulation." The amplifier also makes use of Vishay 1% resistors and Swiss Huber+Suhner wire. In addition to the big Psvane 845B HiFi tubes, the Compact 845 employs long-plate JJ ECC802 triodes in the preamplifier stage (because they're "quieter and less microphonic than the standard ECC82," Ferro explained) and TungSol 6SN7GTBs driver tubes. The 845 uses solid state rectification.

Tube bias is factory-set and mustn't be altered, Ferro stressed, except when changing tubes. "Biasing ... is usually unnecessary for the 845 because these tubes usually work for a very long time. We have our own design of auto-bias circuit that maintains the tubes' value constant during [their] life. Our triode amps are set at

MEASUREMENTS

I performed the measurements of the Mastersound Compact 845 amplifier with my Audio Precision SYS2722 system.¹ The tubes were installed when I received the review sample, and I waited for an hour after powering up the amplifier before starting the testing. The Mastersound runs hot—after an hour the temperature of the top panel in front of the line-stage tubes was 115.9°F/46.6°C.

The Compact 845 inverted polarity from both the 4 ohm and 8 ohm output transformer taps with the balanced and single-ended inputs but preserved absolute polarity from its Direct inputs, which bypass the preamplifier stage and volume control. The voltage gain at 1kHz from the unbalanced Direct inputs was 23.1dB from the 8 ohm tap and 20.7dB from the 4 ohm tap, both figures into 8 ohms. From the regular inputs, the gain into 8 ohms from the 8 ohm tap with the volume control set to its maximum was 32dB, balanced, and 36.55dB, unbalanced. The maximum gains from the 4 ohm tap were both 2.3dB lower.

The input impedance is specified as a high 50k ohms. For the single-ended Direct input, I measured 33k ohms at 20Hz and 1kHz, and 28.6k ohms at 20kHz. The normal unbalanced input's impedance varied from a high 71k ohms at 20Hz to 52.6k ohms at 20kHz; the balanced input imped-

ance was much lower, at 3230 ohms across the audioband.

The source impedance from the 8 ohm output tap was a high 3.5 ohms at 20Hz, 2.6 ohms at 1kHz, and 7.3 ohms at 20kHz. The variation in the small-signal frequency response with this output with our standard simulated loudspeaker² (fig.1, gray trace) was therefore moderately high, at ±1.7dB. The 4 ohm tap's source impedance was lower, at 1.7 ohms at 20Hz, 1.3 ohms at 1kHz, and 3.15 ohms at 20kHz, which meant that the response variation with the simulated speaker was lower, at ±1dB. However, there will be audible modifica-

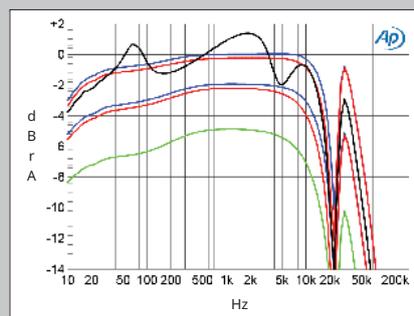


Fig.1 Mastersound Compact 845, 8 ohm output tap, frequency response at 2.83V into: simulated loudspeaker load (gray), 8 ohms (left channel blue, right red), 4 ohms (left cyan, right magenta), and 2 ohms (green) (1dB/vertical div).

tions of loudspeaker responses with both output taps. Into resistive loads (fig.1, blue, red, cyan, magenta, and green traces), the Mastersound amplifier's 8 ohm output shelved down below 40Hz and rolled off above 10kHz, reaching -3dB at 18kHz. A sharply defined response peak at 30kHz correlates with overshoot and ringing in the amplifier's reproduction of a 1kHz squarewave into 8 ohms (fig.2). This peak was higher in amplitude with higher load

¹ See stereophile.com/content/measurements-maps-precision.

² See stereophile.com/content/real-life-measurements-page-2.

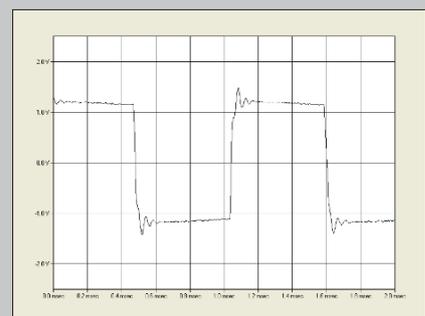


Fig.2 Mastersound Compact 845, 8 ohm output tap, small-signal 1kHz squarewave into 8 ohms.

the factory and only need be set again when the power tubes [are] changed.” Tubes should, consequently, only be changed by a qualified technician. “For our pentode amps, it’s completely automatic and doesn’t need to be set again until the tubes need to be changed.”

Ferro recounted when Luciano Sanavio illustrated the difference between class-A and class-A/B designs by way of analogy: “Luciano did a demonstration at an Italian audio dealer where he asked, ‘Do you know the ball-throwing machine that is used in tennis for training? You can have the ball inside the machine that is already turned on, or you can insert the ball and then turn on the machine: class-A is the first case—at all times you’re running at maximum power; class-A/B, instead, operates only when necessary. Therefore, class-A/B won’t have the same reactivity and speed in transients as class-A.’” The Compact 845 operates in class-A.

Setup

The Compact 845 fit snugly into my five-tier Salamander Archetype rack. I connected it to my Tavish Design Adagio phono stage and, variously, pairs of DeVore Fidelity O/96, Volti Audio Razz, and



measurements, continued

impedances and from the 4 ohm output transformer tap.

Fig.1 was taken with the volume control set to its maximum; the left channel is 0.26dB higher in level at 1kHz than the right. This difference increased to 0.46dB when I repeated the measurement with the volume control set to -20dB, though the response was otherwise identical. Something I noticed while doing these tests was that the Compact 845 emitted audible sounds, which seemed to be coming from the output tube circuitry rather than the transformers. While the level wasn’t very high—the spl in front of the amplifier was 66dB(C), slow ballistics, with

the amplifier driving 1kHz at 1Wpc into 8 ohms—it was still readily audible and was not masked by the NPR news playing on a nearby portable radio in the test lab.

The Compact 845’s channel separation (not shown) was relatively poor, at 50dB in both directions below 1kHz, decreasing to 30dB at the top of the audioband. I monitored the waveform on an oscilloscope when I performed this measurement, which indicated that I was measuring true crosstalk rather than noise. The Mastersound amplifier’s output had a relatively low level of noise. The unweighted, wideband signal/noise ratio (ref. 1W into 8 ohms), taken from the 8 ohm taps

with the inputs shorted to ground and the volume control set to its maximum, was 67.6dB (average of the two channels). This ratio improved slightly to 68.5dB when the measurement bandwidth was restricted to 22Hz–22kHz, and to 78.9dB when A-weighted. With their lower gain, the ratios from the 4 ohm outputs were 2dB greater.

Spectral analysis of the low-frequency noise floor while the Mastersound’s 8 ohm taps drove a 1kHz tone at 1Wpc into 8 ohms with the volume control set to the maximum (fig.3, left channel green, right gray) revealed a low level of random noise. However, AC supply-related spurious at 60Hz and its odd- and even-order

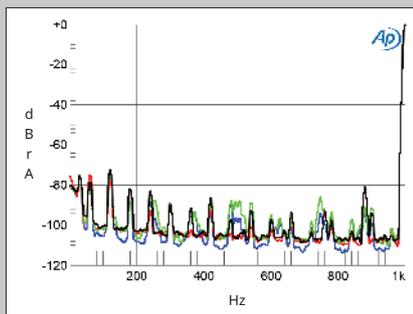


Fig.3 Mastersound Compact 845, 8 ohm output tap, spectrum of 1kHz sinewave, DC–1kHz, at 1Wpc into 8 ohms with volume control set to its maximum (left channel green, right gray) and to -20dB (left blue, right red) (linear frequency scale).

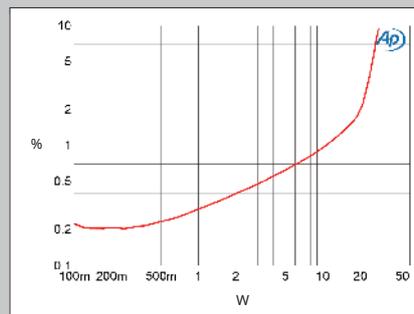


Fig.4 Mastersound Compact 845, 8 ohm output tap, distortion (%) vs 1kHz continuous output power into 8 ohms.

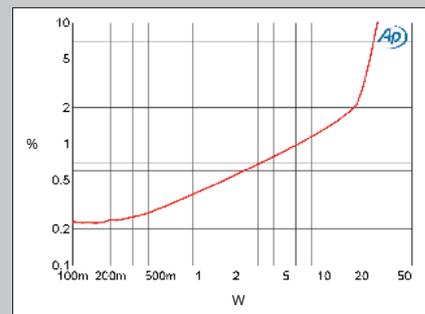


Fig.5 Mastersound Compact 845, 4 ohm output tap, distortion (%) vs 1kHz continuous output power into 4 ohms.

MoFi Electronics SourcePoint 10 loudspeakers with Analysis Plus Silver Apex speaker cables. Acoustic Signature Maximum Neo, Thorens TD 124, and Kuzma Stabi R turntables were my analog sources.

When you turn on the Mastersound amplifier, a red LED begins to flash; when the amplifier reaches operational status, it stops flashing. For optimal performance, the Compact 845 should be turned on at least 30 minutes prior to listening, the manual advises, to allow the tubes to stabilize at their optimal operating temperature. The manual also notes that during operation, the cylindrical transformer enclosures, which act as heatsinks, become quite warm, which is normal.

The manual recommends a minimum of 200 burn-in hours for peak performance. I dutifully streamed Roon/Tidal/Qobuz for about this duration, using an Apple iPad mini and a HoloAudio May DAC as a source.

The 845-O/96 combination

I began my audition with the two-way DeVore Fidelity O/96 loudspeaker, a rich, warm, incisive speaker that uses a 1" silk-dome tweeter and a 10" paper-cone woofer and sounds good with every amplifier and in every room I've heard it in.¹ It was a natural fit for the Mastersound.

I had to push my reference DeVore Fidelity O/96 loudspeakers back 6" to optimize coherence and clarity; once I did that, the system sang. The 845 wowed me with its immense soundstage, which

I attribute partly to its aforementioned silence: the long decay of reverb tails contrasting that outer-space-blackness each enhancing the other. Against this backdrop, music blossomed, consistently creating a you-are-there, live-performance quality that made my DeVore Fidelity O/96s resemble Quad ESL-57s. Music had energy, speed, dynamics, punch, and depth. The Compact 845 ran hot, and so did the music that flowed from its mighty triodes.

The Compact 845 inspired me to audition some new LPs and a few old ones. I listened to Wayne Shorter, Tony Rice, and Maki Asakawa—to Renata Tebaldi, the Beatles, and ZZ Top. The Compact 845 did not favor one genre of music over another. It rendered a sense of intimacy on operatic vocals, jazz, and bluegrass; it was equally generous with rock, electronic, and classical works. Its broad, deep soundstage framed each record in its unique space and time, encouraging repeated playback.

The Contemporary Records recordings of engineer Roy DuNann are the most natural-sounding small-group jazz recordings I've ever heard. For 50-year-old recordings, they sound oddly modern and immediate; these are perfect records to audition hi-fi equipment with. I started with "Custard Puff" from Barney Kessel, Ray Brown, and Shelly Manne's *The Poll Winners Ride Again!* (LP, Contemporary Records S7556). A buoyant, bubbly performance,

¹ See Art Dudley's review at stereophile.com/content/devore-fidelity-orangutan-o96-loudspeaker, his follow-up three years later at stereophile.com/content/devore-fidelity-orangutan-o96-loudspeaker-january-2015, and Jim Austin's follow-up at stereophile.com/content/devore-fidelity-orangutan-o96-loudspeaker-jim-austin-september-2017.

measurements, continued

harmonics were present, and their levels didn't change when I experimented with the grounding between the amplifier and the Audio Precision analyzer. The highest of these spurious, at 120Hz, lay at -73dB (0.02%). Repeating the analysis with the volume control set to -20dB (blue, red traces) lowered the levels of the power supply-related spurious by up to 6dB, but the random noise floor's level didn't change.

Mastersound specifies the Compact 845's maximum power as 30W, which is equivalent to 14.76dBW into 8 ohms and 11.76dBW into 4 ohms. According to Stereophile's usual definition of clipping, when THD+N reaches 1%, the amplifier

didn't get close to that power. With both channels driven, I measured a clipping power of 11.5Wpc from the 8 ohm tap into 8 ohms (10.6dBW, fig.4) and 6.9Wpc from the 4 ohm tap into 4 ohms (5.4dBW, fig.5). Raising the clipping limit to 3% THD+N, I measured 22Wpc with each output tap matched to the load. At 10% THD+N, the Compact 845 approaches its specified power.

Tube amplifiers usually have less distortion when the load impedance is greater than the nominal output transformer impedance. As revealed in fig.6, which plots the THD+N percentage against output power with the 4 ohm tap driving 8 ohms, the Mastersound's THD+N was higher with

a larger load impedance, not lower. At 3% THD+N, the 4 ohm tap was putting out 10Wpc into 8 ohms.

Fig.7 shows how the percentage of THD+N in both channels varied with frequency, with the 8 ohm tap driving 8 and 4 ohms at 4.9V, which is equivalent to 3W into 8 ohms and 6W into 4 ohms. The huge rise in distortion above 10kHz may well be due to the high-frequency rolloff in this region and, perhaps, to the fact that the distortion is being magnified by the output transformer resonance seen in fig.1. The THD+N rose slightly at low frequencies and was higher into 4 ohms (green and gray traces) than it was into 8 ohms (blue and red traces). At the same voltage from the 4

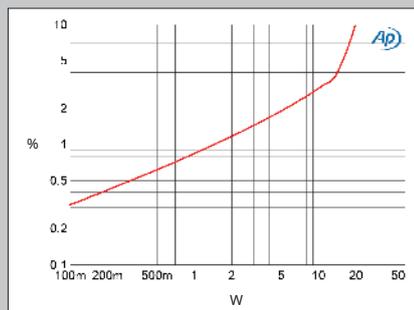


Fig.6 Mastersound Compact 845, 4 ohm output tap, distortion (%) vs 1kHz continuous output power into 8 ohms.

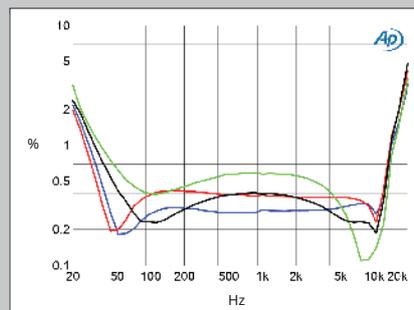


Fig.7 Mastersound Compact 845, 8 ohm output tap, THD+N (%) vs frequency at 4.9V into: 8 ohms (left channel blue, right red), 4 ohms (left green, right gray).

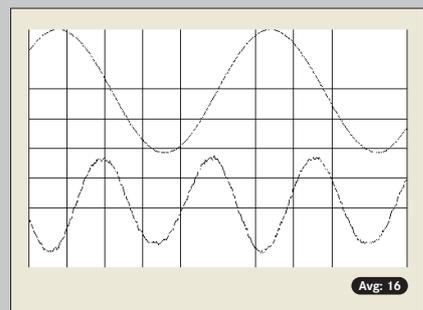


Fig.8 Mastersound Compact 845, 8 ohm output tap, left channel, 1kHz waveform at 1W into 8 ohms, 0.29% THD+N (top); distortion and noise waveform with fundamental notched out (bottom, not to scale).

the Mastersound played it with great weight, air-moving dynamics, and tangible textures, especially on guitar and drums. The dry ride cymbal, taut snare drum, and all the other pieces of Manne's drums came to life with the Mastersound/DeVore pairing: I felt like I was sitting right in front of the kit. As I jotted in my notes, again and again, the soundstage was extremely deep, the back-

Mastersound's Vicenza Conservatory Project

In late 2021, after "two years of contacts and exchanges," Mastersound and the Conservatory of Vicenza "Arrigo Pedrollo" inaugurated a new listening room at the conservatory, which was founded in 1867 within a 13th-century monastery. The project, which was conducted in partnership with the conservatory's director, yielded a listening room equipped with Mastersound amplification and Sonus Faber Olympica Nova II loudspeakers.¹ (Sonus Faber is based in the province of Vicenza.) Advantages flow both ways: Students get to enjoy listening to recorded music in the highest fidelity, while Mastersound gains feedback (the human kind) and regular access to live music that allows them to improve their products "and to make an important contribution to the study and faithful reproduction of sound." The quote is from the Mastersound website.—Ken Micallef

¹ See Larry Greenhill's review of this speaker's little brother, the Olympica Nova II.

grounds dead quiet. The music was full-toned and populated with dramatic stop-start rests. The sound was warm and lush but not syrupy, detailed but not analytical.

The Mastersound Compact 845, like my Shindo Labs separates, veers toward the dark side of neutral, yet it is faster and somewhat more transparent than the Shindo separates. In this respect, it fell somewhere between the rich, opulent tone of the Shindos and the detailed transparency of the Audio Note Meishu Tonmeister, which I reviewed in the February issue.² The Mastersound, though, cast a wider, deeper soundstage than either of the other amplifiers.

The 845-O/96 pairing (re)created a dense, finely layered stage on Vincent d'Indy's *Symphony on a French Mountain Air* (LP, EMI ASD 3480). On Roy Haynes's engrossing *We Three* (LP, New Jazz NJ-8210), it pulled an intimacy-and-bangers feat similar to what it did on *The Poll Winners* disc. On jazz-vocal great Betty Carter's *Inside Betty Carter* (LP, United Artists Records UAL 3379), it cut through the poor recording quality to extract gut-punch dynamics.

The 845-O/96 duo produced sweet tone, lush, transparent mids, and satisfying bass—of the full-bodied variety, not carved-in-space tight. To my ears, perfect balance.

The 845 with the Volti Razz

The Volti Audio Razz loudspeaker is a three-way, hybrid bass reflex/horn loudspeaker that combines a 1" horn-loaded tweeter,

² See stereophile.com/content/audio-note-meishu-tonmeister-phon-integrated-amplifier.

measurements, continued

ohm tap (not shown), the distortion in the midrange and treble was close to 0.6% into 4 ohms and 1% into 8 ohms.

Fortunately, as fig.8 shows, the distortion was predominantly the (arguably innocuous) second harmonic, with higher-order harmonics progressively lower in level (fig.9). However, at low frequencies (fig.10), the level of the third harmonic was the same as the second, perhaps indicating the onset of core saturation in the output transformers.

Due to the masking, the level of the second harmonic may not result in audible distortion with music, as long as it is not accompanied by intermodulation distortion. With the Compact 845's 8 ohm taps

driving an equal mix of 19 and 20kHz tones at 3Wpc peak into 8 ohms (fig.11), the 1kHz difference product lay at -30dB (0.3%), and many higher-order intermodulation products were present. This behavior correlates with the increase in THD+N in the top audio octave seen in fig.7. The amplifier may well sound better than this test suggests, since top-octave energy level is typically lower in music than in test tones. However, this information is presented here, as it is with every review, since we standardized on this intermodulation test when we started measuring amplifiers three decades ago.

Other than the differences caused by different output tubes—the 845 tube is

capable of putting out more power than the 300B—these results are very similar to those measured in the Mastersound 300 B S.E. integrated amplifier, which Art Dudley reviewed in March 2008.³ The high levels of distortion and the high source impedances will be due to the single-ended triode topology and the decision not to use loop negative feedback. I concluded my discussion of the 300 B S.E. measurements by asking whether the reviewer liked the amplifier because of what it did right *despite* what it did wrong, or *because* of what it did wrong. In 2008, I didn't have an answer to that question. I still don't.—John Atkinson

³ See stereophile.com/content/mastersound-300-b-se-integrated-amplifier-measurements.

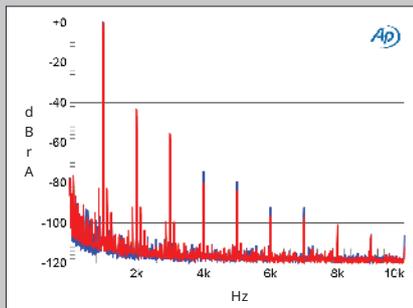


Fig.9 Mastersound Compact 845, 8 ohm output tap, spectrum of 1kHz sine wave, DC-10kHz, at 3Wpc into 8 ohms (left channel blue, right red; linear frequency scale).

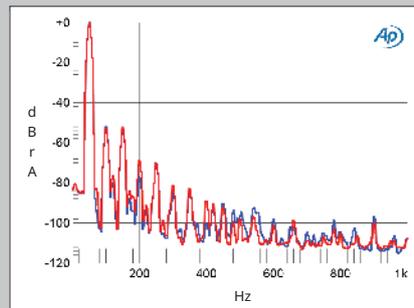


Fig.10 Mastersound Compact 845, 8 ohm output tap, spectrum of 50Hz sine wave, DC-1kHz, at 3Wpc into 8 ohms (left channel blue, right red; linear frequency scale).

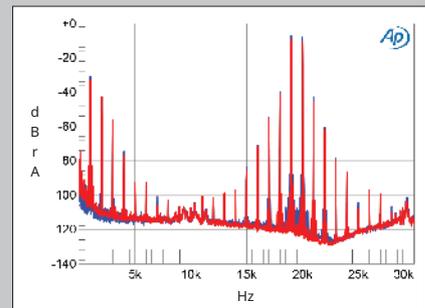


Fig.11 Mastersound Compact 845, 8 ohm output tap, HF intermodulation spectrum, DC-30kHz, 19+20kHz at 3Wpc peak into 8 ohms (left channel blue, right red; linear frequency scale).

a wide-dispersion, metal midrange horn with a 2" composite-diaphragm compression driver, and a 12" paper-cone woofer paired to a front-firing rectangular port. I've reviewed the Volti Rival;³ the Razz is cut from a similar cloth. The Razz is considerably heavier than the DeVore Fidelity O/96, although its cabinet volume is slightly smaller. And where richness, sweetness, and detail are the DeVore's strengths, what's most notable about the Razz is a clear-blue-sky top end and earth-rumbling lows.

On record after record, with the Compact 845 in the driver's seat, the Razz produced deep, clean, copious low end, a sparkling, neutral midrange, and brilliant, wide-open treble. On Art Pepper's *Smack Up* (LP, Contemporary Records S7602), Pepper's tone was tart and fast, Jack Sheldon's trumpet spun his *Schoolhouse Rock!* days on their head, and the rhythm section of bassist Jimmy Bond and drummer Frank Butler delivered dancing cadences at a measured pace, with appropriate momentum.

This combination also ran the table with classical vinyl due to its exceptional clarity, beautiful layering of instruments, impressive speed, and deep soundstage. On *Boulez Conducts Stravinsky: Firebird Suite* (Columbia MS 7206), the pairing heightened the sense of drama and urgency of the piece. A rip-roaring *Night on Bald Mountain*, with the Cleveland Orchestra under Lorin Maazel, from *Mussorgsky: Pictures at an Exhibition / Night on Bald Mountain* (LP, Telarc 10042), played with such spirited power that I felt as if I myself were being chased down the mountain, the devil at my heels. The 845/Razz combination had tone and texture as well, amply heard in Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra's recording of Shostakovich's 5th Symphony (LP, RCA Red Seal ARL1-1149).

The 845/SourcePoint duo

Just as I was finishing this review, I received the MoFi Electronics SourcePoint 10 loudspeakers, which Technical Editor John Atkinson reviewed in the January 2022 issue.⁴ John used a variety of solid state amplifiers to drive the SourcePoint 10, from Parasound, Schitt, and Benchmark. I wanted to audition the MoFi speaker with tubes.

With the Mastersound driving the SourcePoint 10s, I heard nothing tipped up—but I did hear a treble that was lit, clear, dense, and superdetailed. Tony Williams's hi-hat and ride cymbals, on "Love for Sale," the title song of an album by the Great Jazz Trio (LP, East Wind EW-8046), played with detail, silken texture, and clean, full-bodied attack—more so than I'd ever heard it. On the same track, Ron Carter's bass was incredibly deep and tight. The Mastersound and the SourcePoints played together like friends in a hi-fi sandbox.

Conclusion

The Mastersound Compact 845 hits all my sonic sweet spots: gorgeous, burnished tube tone, palpable instrumental texture, unerring naturalism, lush, rich, transparent midrange, solid bass, open treble, black background, precise layering of instruments and vocals—and

ASSOCIATED EQUIPMENT

Analog sources Acoustic Signature Maximus Neo turntable with Acoustic Signature Neo TA 1000 tonearm and Maximus MCX3 MC cartridge; Kuzma Stabi R turntable, Kuzma 4Point tonearm, and Luxman LMC-5 MC cartridge; Thorens TD 124 turntable with Jelco 350 S tonearm and EMT TSD15 N MC cartridge.

Digital sources HoloAudio May DAC, Sonore opticalRendu, Roon Nucleus+, Small Green Computer power supply, TRENDnet switch, Apple iPad mini.

Preamplifier Tavish Design Adagio phono stage.

Loudspeakers DeVore Fidelity Orangutan O/96, Volti Audio Razz, MoFi Electronics SourcePoint 10.

Cables Interconnects: Triode Wire Labs Spirit II, Shindo Labs, Analysis Plus Silver Apex (RCA). Speaker: Analysis Plus Silver Apex Speaker. AC: Triode Wire Labs Obsession NCF.

Accessories Pro-Ject VC-S2 ALU Record Cleaning Machine, Audio Desk Systeme Vinyl Cleaner Pro, Hunt Mark 6 Carbon Fiber Record Cleaning Brush, IsoTek EVO3 Aquarius line conditioner, Salamander five-tier Archetype rack (2), IKEA Aptitlig bamboo chopping boards (under turntable, preamp, power and integrated amps), mahogany blocks under cutting boards. Hi-fi set up on short wall firing into 10' x 12' room, wood slat on plaster walls.—Ken Micallef

the deepest, punchiest soundstage I've heard. It was also eerily quiet. Like the Audio Note Meishu Tonmeister integrated amplifier I reviewed in January 2023, I would be happy to live with this amplifier for the rest of my days. With the Compact 845, Mastersound moves to the front row in the hallowed hall of master tube-amplifier manufacturers, alongside Shindo, Audio Note, Air Tight, Line Magnetic, Luxman, and PrimaLuna. ■

³ See [stereophile.com/content/volti-audio-rival-loudspeaker](https://www.stereophile.com/content/volti-audio-rival-loudspeaker). Also see Tom Gibbs's Razz review at [stereophile.com/content/volti-audio-razz-loudspeaker](https://www.stereophile.com/content/volti-audio-razz-loudspeaker).

⁴ See John Atkinson's review at [stereophile.com/content/mofi-electronics-sourcepoint-10-loudspeaker](https://www.stereophile.com/content/mofi-electronics-sourcepoint-10-loudspeaker).

