

# Hi-Fi and Home Theatre

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**“All the attributes of valve amplification are revealed with this amp - the stage depth, the transparency, the bass and the presence of the performers recreated in your room, all there for you to enjoy . . . That’s what valve amps do to you, they wring the emotion out of the music, they don’t hit you in the face like a big transistor amp can. . . .”**

that its production facility is very highly regarded and comes with a wealth of technical expertise to back it all up.

The result is that it turns out some pretty outstanding electronics and what a little beauty this baby is. A 45 watt, fully-featured, all valve, integrated amplifier of outstanding build quality and component selection, utilising four large KT88 output valves, driven by two 6SN7 phase inverter/driver valves and two 6SL7 valves for the preamp section, all ‘valves of choice’ amongst the high-end fraternity. A large 300 watt toroidal power transformer and equally large EI type audio output transformers, all potted, featuring low noise, low magnetic leakage, wide frequency response and low inductance are custom made for Cayin utilising unique manufacturing techniques and workmanship.

The A-88T comes with a smart, full function remote control machined from a solid billet of alloy with tactile feel buttons controlling everything but power on/off.

The chassis is hard wired, point-to-point using high quality audio specification Realcap and Nichicon capacitors, Alps motorised volume control, military specification resistors and quality internal wiring. The valves used are specially selected, very high quality and branded with the Cayin logo.

All of the 10 input sockets are high quality gold plated machined RCA types and the eight multi-impedance tapped, speaker output sockets are of shielded gold plated ‘WBT type’ construction.

The chassis is beautifully laid out in the traditional valve amp manner, very solidly constructed with the potted transformers fully enclosed to the rear, valves sitting on lots of ventilated chrome and multi layer silver anodised 10mm thick front panel aluminium plates supporting the front controls and indicators. It’s absolutely drop-dead gorgeous to look at, exquisitely finished and wonderfully executed. I have been around a bit and I have seen many

attempts to produce valve amplifiers by many manufacturers but this has to be the most well executed example I can recall ever seeing; I was absolutely ‘gob-smacked’.

The electrical specification is just as impressive with power supplies ‘custom made in house’ to Australian and New Zealand specification, with C-TICK and CE certification, so no Australian safety authority standards are breached here and there are no worries for the consumer regarding safety or reliability.

The amplifier produces 45 watts in ultra linear mode and has the added advantage of being able to be switched via the remote or front panel to a 22 watt triode mode. The triode mode of operation being the favoured mode of operation by the valve purists, giving a subjective more seductive sound at the expense of efficiency, hence the power reduction to 22 watts per channel. Distortion is quoted as being less than one per cent, which is good for a valve amp as it is of predominately even order harmonics which are pleasant to the ear, as opposed to solid state transistor odd order harmonics which sound offensive and must be kept as low as possible. Frequency response is quoted at 18Hz-35kHz and a signal to noise ratio of 90dB; most credible figures for any valve amp.

Input sensitivity is 260mV at 100K ohms for the three preamp inputs. This puts the volume control in the correct position i.e. between 10 o’clock and 1 o’clock, for normal listening. A direct 600mV input is also provided so the A-88T can be used as a power amp only. The speaker output taps range in impedance from 16 ohms (perfect for those delightful BBC LS3/5a monitors) to 8 ohms and through to 4 ohms. All control functions are relay switched and the amp is fitted with a 30 second soft start and mute facility. Technically, this amplifier, in my opinion, is faultless; every base has been covered within its design specification so let’s see what it sounds like.

