

Peter Familiari discovers an amplifier making loud noises in the audio world

THE hottest product to kickstart the new audio year isn't a leading-edge, high-price digital amplifier. It's the budget-priced PrimaLuna Prologue One, thanks to its amazing sound and exquisite build.

Connect international show reporter Ken Kessler was bowled over when he reviewed the PrimaLuna Prologue One for Britain's *Hi-Fi News and Record Review* magazine.

As were writers for American audio magazines *Stereophile* and *The Absolute Sound*.

The reviews said the PrimaLuna set a benchmark at its price.

The PrimaLuna (right) has now arrived in Australia courtesy of Victorian-based distributor Reference Audio Video.

A sample arrived at *Connect's* listening room, where it was quickly linked to a pair of ProAc Response 1SC speakers and Arcam's 33T CD player, wired throughout with Shunyata interconnect, speaker cables and a Hydra 2 power filter.

The sound came on song without an extended burn-in period.

But after a couple of weeks of work it went to a new level as the valves and point-to-point circuit burnt in.

Veteran audiophiles such as my good buddy Wolf felt the sound was good enough to embarrass a pair of revered Quad 11 amplifiers as well as a much-adored Radford STAmk3 amplifier I own.

With the Proacs, the PrimaLuna's sound was clean and coherent from top to bottom and had more extension in the treble and bass than most entry-level amplifiers I've heard.

The PrimaLuna driven within its 35 watts a channel limits also had drive and pace.

Fed a range of CDs and SACD, the sound was laced with inner detail that was presented in an acoustic sound stage that had staggering depth, width and height.

But the quality that makes this well-priced amplifier stand out from



Hot glass, cool sound

the competition was the musical insight the PrimaLuna delivers to the listener's ears.

The PrimaLuna's design ensures it is a low-anxiety device for aspiring audiophiles with little experience of valve amplifiers.

The amplifier has an adaptive audio bias that automatically adjusts the amount of voltage required by the unit's six valves, which consist of four EL34s, a 12AX7 and 12AU7.

This removes the need for any tampering, save for slotting the valves into their bases and turning on the power switch.

The PrimaLuna may well be the amplifier that turns on a new generation of music lovers to the seductive sounds emanating from those glowing glass tubes.

Highly recommended and a best buy.

Reference Audio Video: 1800 133 135, A1 Audio: 9764 9936, Carlton Audio Visual: 9639 2737, Frankston Hi-Fi: 9781 1111

THE VERDICT

PrimaLuna Prologue One

Model: integrated valve amplifier

Price: \$2499

Pros: High-end sound for a budget price, excellent standard of finish, breezy set-up, clearly written manual and solid speaker terminals.

Cons: The modest power means it works best with speakers that have a power efficiency of 90db or better.



Sound investment: *Sound & Vision* editor Peter Familiari with a McIntosh MC275.

Valves rock on

VALVE amplifiers are a long way from history's techno scrap heap. Hundreds of brands are building amplifiers, preamplifiers and CD players studded with valves.

Just after getting the PrimaLuna to review, *Connect* received the new McIntosh MC275 amplifier, the Audio Valve Eclipse preamplifier and Baldur valve monobloc amplifiers. There is also an integrated amplifier from Plessis Audio.

The big Mac, which will sell for \$5299, is not the Gordon Gow model released several years ago. It's a new model that sounds much more transparent than the Gow edition.

Audio Valve is a German-made brand. It has styling and the kind of performance that defines what we've come to expect from valve technology.

The 75 watt a channel Mono blocs will have an RRP of about \$10,000.

The sweet-sounding Plessis was designed in Sydney and made in China to a high standard.

It has auto valve bias and can be switched between triode and ultra linear mode.

Each model will be roadtested in *Connect* soon.

PETER FAMILIARI

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