

# Pure Sound 2A3

hi-fineWS  
EDITOR'S  
CHOICE

**S**tyled like the equally plain Icon, Pure Sound's 2A3 has much to entice individualistic valve lovers, especially the choice of tube that provides the name. The 2A3 is a directly-heated triode many see as an alternative to the 300B, with its own cult following. In push-pull form, the 2A3's two pairs deliver enough power to drive every speaker in the review session without self-immolating.

However bland the look, the 2A3 is beautifully made, quiet running (in fact, all the amps were well-behaved in that area) and so sweet-sounding that you wonder why the 300B is the more popular tube.

What distinguishes this from the run of Asian amps is that its valves are properly matched for left and right channels, including the 6SN7 drivers, saving you the desire to upgrade to better tubes. And, like dearer amps from, say, Audio Research, every valve is numbered to ensure correct installation. Parts quality, too, is high: volume is adjusted via a silky-feeling ALPS pot, and the innards include selected carbon film resistors and SCR polypropylene caps.

## SOUNDS SO-O-O GOOD

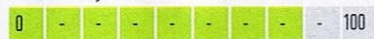
Fed the pounding bass/drum intro of 'She Needs Me', the 2A3 exhibited body, clarity, mass and transparency. Even the easily-lost tambourine, offstage right, was audible and

tangible, the drums rock-solid, the voice dead-centre. They elevated the 2A3 to a level of competence that makes you wish it wasn't so damned plain-looking, for this amplifier does not deserve to be ignored.

If we were using a Venn diagram, the 2A3's performance would position it dead centre in terms of audible character: the punchier, tighter Icon and Eastern Electric would appear on one side, the more fluid and warm Separo and the Consonance on the other. While the M520 seems to me to exhibit the most evenly balanced strengths of any model in the group, and the Icon is the most practical and flexible, the 2A3 is the most 'audiophilic': it has most of the warmth of the 300Bs combined with the lower octave authority of EL34s. And at no point did I wish it had optional mode settings.

So what keeps it from being the clear winner? It's priced at the top of the group, its absolute power is bettered by the less costly Icon Stereo 40 MkIII and it looks like a kit from *Wireless World*, circa 1958. On the other hand, it sounds so-o-o damned good.

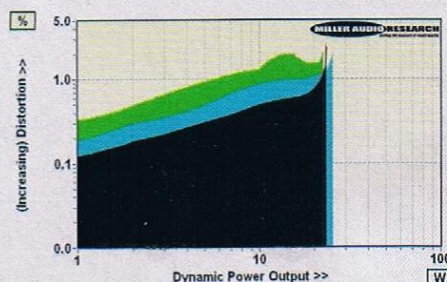
Sound Quality: 78%



**ABOVE:** It doesn't get any clearer or more basic than three rotaries, providing on/off, volume and source. Beautifully-finished knobs offset the otherwise gloomy look

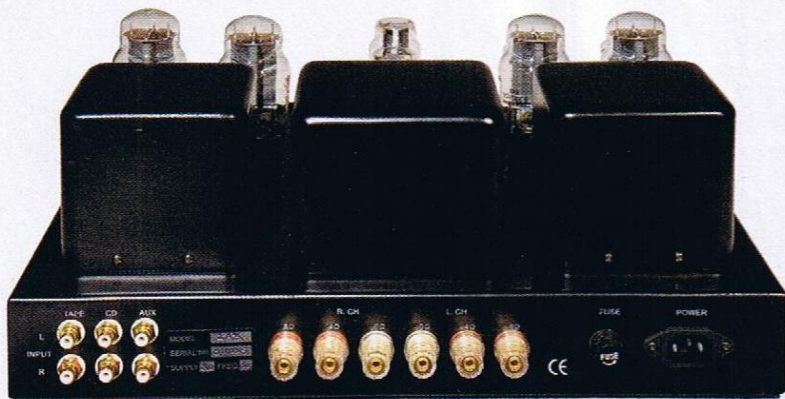
## HI-FI NEWS LAB REPORT

With direct-heated 2A3 triodes in its output stage, each pair configured in push-pull mode, this amp can deliver a full 2x20W/8ohm at 2% and 2x9W at 1% distortion – well within its specification. Importantly, the Pure Sound 2A3 benefited from the best-matched output tubes and transformers of our group, showing a close tracking of distortion versus frequency (~0.4% through upper bass to 3.5% at 20kHz) between left and right channels, a matched 82dB A-wtd S/N ratio (re. 0dBW) and also quite the widest stereo separation of >72dB across the entire audio range. The amp's response is flat to within ±0.5dB from 20Hz-20kHz, falling away to -6dB/5Hz and -7dB/100kHz, while the ~2.5ohm output impedance suggests slightly less variation will occur with different speakers than with other amps in our group. Power consumption is also low for the breed at 155W and warm-up time was measured at about five minutes. PM



**ABOVE:** Dynamic power output versus distortion into 8ohm (black trace), 4ohm (red), 2ohm (blue) and 1ohm loads (green)

Dynamic power (<2% THD, 8/4/2/1ohm)	24W / 23W / 26W / 23W
Output impedance (20Hz-20kHz)	2.8-2.3ohm (8ohm tap)
Frequency response (20Hz-20kHz)	-0.5dB to -0.2dB (8ohm tap)
Input sensitivity (for 0dBW)	97mV
A-wtd S/N ratio (for 0dBW)	81.6dB / 82.8dB (L/R)
Distortion (20Hz-20kHz, 5W/8ohm)	0.4-3.9% / 0.3-3.4% (L/R)
Power consumption (Idle/Rated o/p)	155W/200W
Dimensions (WHD)	436x190x350mm



**ABOVE:** Like the front, so basic and functional that it's almost Bauhaus: three pairs of gilded phono sockets, multi-way binding posts offering 4ohm/8ohm connections