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I am not surprised that the Bryston 4B-3 is Bryston's best-selling power amplifier

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REVIEW

Bryston BP17-3 Preamplifier and 4B3 Power Amplifier

Review by George Sallit



I reviewed the Bryston BP17-3 pre-amp and the Bryston 3B-3 power amplifier earlier and really enjoyed the sound.

I seriously considered the dreaded opening of the wallet and talked to a few audio friends about doing it.

DON'T was the answer.

But why?

Well, the next model up, the Bryston 4B-3 also has great sound quality, higher power output and is not that much more expensive.

The Bryston 3B-3 produces 200 watts into 8 Ohms from a neat box that is 17" W x 8.1" H x 10.75" D and weighs 16 kg whereas the Bryston 4B-3 produces 300 watts

into 8 ohms from a box that is 17" W x 6.3" H x 15.5" D and weighs 19 kg. The Bryston 4B-3 is about 50% deeper than the Bryston 3B-3, but the price difference is not that much more with the Bryston 3B-3 at £5495 and the Bryston 4B-3 at £6,495.

Both models feature totally independent power supplies including two transformers, the Salomie circuit, switchable gain and the unique (as far as I know) 20-year guarantee. Bryston said the main internal differences were the power transistors, and the Bryston 4B-3's power supply is twice the size of the Bryston 3B-3.

A quick call and e-mail to PMC

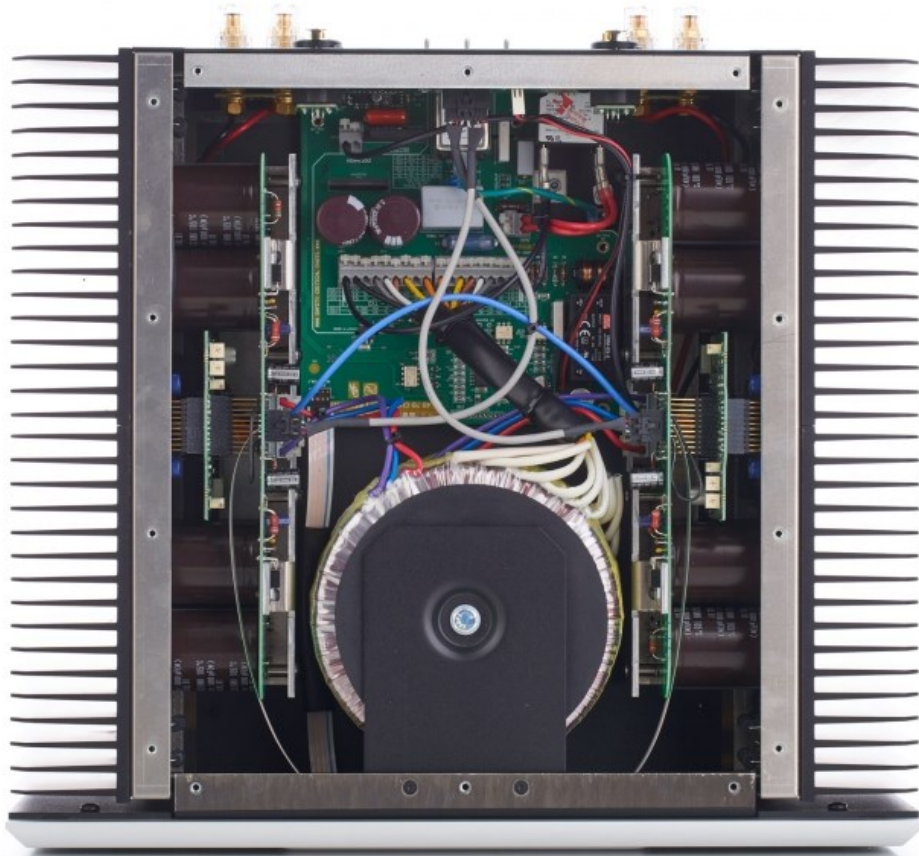
Bryston - Sound Was Something To Behold

their distributors in the UK, and they agreed to send me a BP17-3 preamplifier (the same one used in the previous review) and a demo Bryston 4B-3 amplifier.

I had no problems connecting these amplifiers into my system, an AN 4 CDT, a Melco N100 digital box, Audionote DAC 4.1x /Denafrips Terminator+ DAC and Audionote E Silver Signature speakers. Vinyl was supplied by a Voyd 0.5 Ref, SME V, Audionote lo II and an Audionote S-2 transformer. Cables were a mixture of Audioquest, Audionote and Cut Loose silver ribbons.

Although a demo amplifier, I connected the system up and left it running for a day before any serious listening. Everything worked as it should and I used the Bryston 4B-3 in the same way as I had used the Bryston 3B-3

I played the same music as before and surprise, surprise the sound was very similar. Starting with Thin Lizzy, Live and Dangerous it sounded, live and very dangerous. It was easy to get into the overall pace and dynamics of this recording. I looked at my previous review notes and what the Bryston 4B-3 did differently was there was a more relaxed sound to this live recording. Not a softening of dynamics but a feeling similar to driving a big powerful car where you know and can tell that no matter what happens you will never run out of power. Yes, the Es are 97 dB efficient and being about 6 ohms impedance will have 450 watts/channel from the Bryston 4B-3,



I Forgot The Review And Lost Myself In The Music

BRYSTON



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THE DEMO
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but that sense of ease, even when I had 95db sound pressure levels in my 10 m x 7 m room, was something to behold.



Moving onto classical music and playing the finale of Beethoven 9th by the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra in the Heinz Hall, the Reference Recording captured the sound of a huge orchestra in a huge hall. Both the atmosphere and ambience of the hall and the sheer power of a full orchestra with a huge choir, all in unison, was well captured and easy to lose yourself in the music in the same way as you do with live music.

Power and delicacy with a natural, relaxed sound. The huge dynamic range was well captured and you have to be careful not to set the sound levels from the first movement as the finale is likely to blow your socks off. It was pomp and show.

Playing some of Mike Valentine’s recording of Justin Pearson playing superb cello in Temple Church brought back memories of being there and hearing this music as it was being recorded. Justin Pearson is a master of the cello and it is not surprising that he plays for the National Symphony Orches-

tra. The emotion from the cello was well captured and spell-binding. And with the delicacy of the piano playing adding to the cello made it even better. All with that natural ease you hear in real life.

And on it went as I forgot the review and just lost myself in the music. Sessions went from a few hours a day to be the whole day. And my set of test music was replaced by music where I said, I wonder what this album sounds like. For a lot of the albums there was more to hear but for others nothing more. Oddly enough, those albums recorded earlier (before DAWs?) and ones that happened quickly had more to show.

In conclusion, this combination is worth the additional £1K to give what initially looks like excessive power, as it allows everything to work with a real sense of ease that translates into more realistic music.

I am therefore going to turn into an audio-bore and like others recommend anyone considering buying the BP17-3/3B-3 combination to very seriously consider getting the Bryston 4B-3 if they can afford it over the Bryston 3B-3. I am not surprised that the Bryston 4B-3 is Bryston’s best-selling power amplifier.

