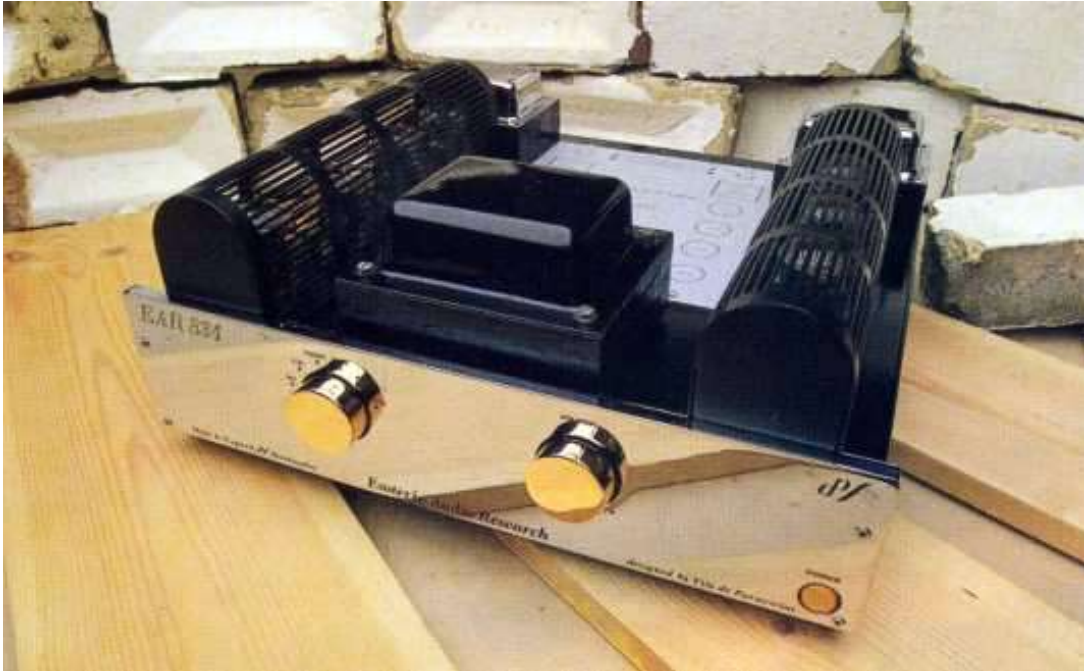


EAR 834 review

by Editorial Team Posted on September 18, 2021



EAR (Esoteric Audio Research) is run by one of the major figures in British amplifier design, Tim de Paravicini. Tim has designed many successful solid state models for other people but has concentrated on serious tube amplifiers for his own brand.

The 834 is the first EAR integrated amp and is a real treat to behold. It oozes sex appeal and quality. From the chunky chrome plated front panel to the architectural tube covers it inspires confidence. Comparing it with the other three units in this group, one can't help but wonder how Tim has managed to make the 834 look this good without pushing the price higher.

On the facilities front it has six line inputs and a tape out, which is about par for the breed, though the absence of a balance control makes it the least knob strewn beast in the bunch.

Sound quality

Listening to the 834 one initially notices that it's relatively dry sounding with fairly lean bass and a sharp, clean midrange; but the more you listen, the more it begins to sound like a transistor amp. This amp has a sense of energy and electricity that makes records much more gripping to listen to. It pins you to your seat and forces you to listen which can be thrilling, but is fatiguing in the long term.

The tight, tough presentation is tremendously appealing. Bass is given real muscle and there's no shortage of clarity, My live Black Crowes CD has never sounded this much like the venue it was recorded in, and

Patrick O'Hearn's bass on Lobster Girl has rarely had this sort of texture. I was inclined to play non test tracks just to see what they'd sound like.

However, the 834 has a strong tendency to become fatiguing, and if you listen to something that is itself aggressive you may have to throw in the towel before the end of the disc.

Conclusion

I realise, of course, that some tastes are inclined this way, so if you find most tube amps too laid back, and want a bit more meat with your gravy than many transistor amps offer, then this could be the one for you. Not an amp for the faint-hearted, the EAR 834 requires total commitment and careful speaker selection. Recommended, with the caveat that if you're a tube fan you probably won't like it.