

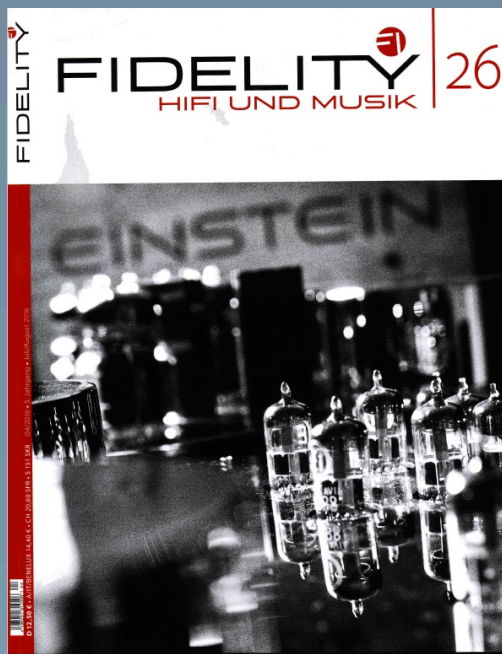
BRYSTON

A Lifetime of Music

MEMO: To All Bryston Customers

SUBJECT: Bryston 4B Cubed Review in Germany

June 2016



FIDELITY

26

HIFI AND MUSIC

SPOTLIGHT - AMPLIFIER

BRYSTON 4B3

Text: Uwe Heckers, Pictures: Ingo Schulz

---Hardly any other amplifier can look back toward such a long production history as the 4B power amplifier first introduced in 1976 by Bryston. Let's repeat it once again: 1976! Only its smaller sister 3B, which has been even longer in the program, and at the outside the likewise legendary Naim NAP 250, can look upon a similar far back reaching family tree.

Naturally with the 4B3 (the "3" stands for "cubed") the basic concept has been kept over the years: Consistent double mono construction (including two power supply transformers), high Class A proportion (the first five percent of the rated output are presented in this esteemed sound beneficial mode), as well as parallel functioning amplifier circuitry. Furthermore a Bryston 4B amplifier always provides high three place output capability. Thanks to its stability it is still the means of choice when it is necessary to drive difficult loudspeakers.

In its actual present incarnation the 4B3 makes available 300 Watts into 8 ohms and 500 Watts into 4 ohms, and in bridged mode as a monaural amplifier even 900 Watts into 8 ohms, according to Bryston. Here suspicion might quickly arise that a 4B amplifier “can’t function because of so much power” and that in musical sense it would go to work rather roughly instead of gently. However exactly that is – and was – never the case! Precisely the opposite: the quality of a Bryston power amplifier is especially demonstrated by its harmonizing with high efficiency loudspeakers. This capability makes them just as popular with “quiet” listeners, as with those who drive acknowledged temperamental loudspeakers.

However the Canadians not only changed the outside, now a somewhat more pleasant appearing design, but especially once again took to task the input stages. By means of



a new patented circuit chief engineer Christopher Russell and his team succeeded in minimizing distortion of the input stage to under one thousandths of a percent. This looks a bit like the data fetishism of bygone decades, where one cheered every further zero after the decimal point, but one should recognize that every, no matter how tiny, distortion in the input region will also be mercilessly amplified, and therefore can audibly impact the output signal. The configuration of the 4B remained untouched. One can choose between balanced and unbalanced input, as well as the amplification factor in two steps, in order to match loudspeakers, preamps, and also one’s own listening habits. The Bryston 4B3 amplifier is available in black or silver as before, with a 17 or

19 inch front panel, and with or without handles. Fortunately, as before, the warranty time is twenty (!) years, and includes replacement parts, labor, and return shipping to the customer.

The basic revision, especially the updated input stage, has most apparently borne comprehensible fruit Soundwise. Noticeable is a heightened audible transparency, which provides a definite plus for singular sound happenings in matters of spatial perception and tonal colors. At the same time there are less superficial effects to report, for example voices do not become exaggerated, but are represented believably sized and lifelike.

Let me mention at least one listening example: Already since eternity I utilize the recording of Carl Orff's *Die Kluge (The Smart One)* played by the Radio Symphony Orchestra Leipzig under the direction of Herbert Kegel for tonal evaluation of a component. **With the Bryston "cubic" 4B3 I have in fact discovered new nuances in this recording which I have heard thousands of times.** The Bryston amplifier offers a large expansive stage, voices are more understandable, and the soft decaying of different instruments succeeds definitely more nuanced in comparison to my own 3BSST amplifier.

Is the Bryston 4B3 amplifier sound-wise the best 4B of all times? Yes, it is without any doubt, in my opinion. But beyond that it is one of the best power amplifiers which one can purchase.

The next 40 years can come!

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Translated from the German by Peter Ullman