

Mapletree Audio Design Ear+ HD250 Special Edition Headphone Amplifier

Listener Impressions – Kane Vere, South Africa

Kane purchased a prototype of the HD250 with sufficient power for his AKG K1000 headphones (120 Ohms). In order to provide a boost in output current capability, the output stage was re-designed to accommodate EL84/6BQ5 output tubes. Input gain was provided using a SRPP voltage amplification stage requiring no electrolytic cathode bypass capacitor. Auricap output coupling capacitors replaced the normal Black Gate electrolytics. A high-voltage power supply was provided employing a 5AR4 full wave rectifier with a capacitor-choke filter. Here are Kane's listening impressions with two very different headphone types.

“I have been living with the HD250P for just over a month now; in that time I also took delivery of the Sennheiser HD800 headphones. I am in awe of what you have wrought with this amp. Firstly, on the K1000s, the amp has unmasked a little bit of upper mid detail that hitherto before has been hidden or not obvious on a variety of amps raging from humble to grandiose such as my own Air Tight ATM-300. Not only that, I am unexpectedly thoroughly addicted to the mids on the HD250P, no mean feat considering that the K1000s were driven by WE300Bs before. With the HD800s hooked the amp really comes into it's own; exquisitely detailed yet sweet, perfectly balanced mids with just a hint of bloom and taut tuneful bass make a solid foundation for an excellent sound stage and pinpoint imaging. There is more than enough power to drive the Sennheiser's with authority and I have yet to hear any instance where this grip is loosened even a bit. This grip though is tempered with grace and poise that simply lets the music flow unfettered and unmolested. Dawn Upshaw's achingly beautiful "Three Songs" from Osvaldo Golijov's "Oceana" is as convincing as Jimi Hendrix ripping a new hole in space on Voodoo Child. More one could not ask for from an amp. The combo is intoxicating and keeps me coming back for more whenever time allows the indulgence. Perhaps that is the operative word actually, I feel supremely indulged after a good listening session with the HD250P/HD800/K1000”.