

AUDIOPHILE
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Important Note from the Editor
Audio Note COBRA Vacuum Tube Amplifier

"Audio Note, the British amplifier manufacturer with sky-high prices, recently launched the Cobra amplifier with EL34 tubes, which has created quite a buzz among amp users... When it comes to new products, Cobra is the best-performing EL34 power amplifier on the market today.

"When I first listened to Cobra in our editor's listening room with a golden ratio of 14-foot x 20-foot, it pushed the Altec A5 impeccably. The sound, emotions and strength were so good that it was flawless. At this price point, the Cobra simply does not have any other contenders in new foreign tube amplifiers. Then when we used the Cobra to push Rogers LS 3/5A... the results proved that the strength of the Cobra's 28 watts x 2 channels and the LS 3/5A makes for another beautiful sound pairing that is irreplaceable. The sleek and sweet tone and the richness of emotions made me reluctant to leave my seat."

"The Cobra was powerful in creating an awe-inspiring, room-bursting sound effect. It proves that if the Cobra is placed in a small room to push a high-efficiency speaker system, it can be used as an integrated amp. However, to play to the Cobra's potential and advantage, a pre-amp of equal calibre is indispensable... The EL34 tubes can operate under high voltage, and with a push-pull amplifier, the EL34 tubes can already create a concrete 100 watt output. If a low wattage output is desired, the EL34s can produce a reliably elegant sound. Its robustness is self-evident."

"After the Cobra appeared, it made sense to test whether it can also push the [Wilson Audio] WAMM with two EL34s per channel. The resulting performance of the Cobra in my home is no different from its sound effect in the listening room. The tone, the emotion and the strength were all surprisingly good, leaving everyone speechless. On top of that, with the detailed analysis from WAMM, it is evident that those who tuned the Cobra are well-versed in what makes for beautiful vocals, and made a warm, poignant sound their top priority... Originally, the sound of WAMM by itself leans towards being cold, but with a push from the Cobra, the music has a little more sunshine, giving people a seasonal sense of joy between spring and summer.

"Two important tips:

1. A perfect pair with Audio Note M2 –
M2 is Audio Note's the entry-level model, with a reasonable price and a superior design. Its single 6SN7 line stage is designed to "do it all", and embodies Audio Note's design belief of "Simple is Beautiful". When the M2 is matched with the Cobra, the sound effect simply makes it the most beautiful pre-amp and power amp combo on the market for under HK\$100,000 today.

2. EL34 can be upgraded to Telefunken vintage valves –
With four "Telefunken" first generation dual triode valves made in the 1950s at the old Ulm factory in West Germany, the sound instantly became rounder, thicker and twice as musical. The melodic charm also improved by at least 20%."

"The Cobra is Audio Note's pentode masterpiece, a fruition from the maker's cumulation of decades of experience in amplifier manufacturing. For those who wish to experience the sound quality of Audio Note's other pricey amplifiers at a reasonable price, this model is not to be missed."

- Y. K. Chan