



Memo: To All Bryston Customers

Subject: 28B SST Mono Blocks Get Great Review in England

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The Bryston 28-SST mono-blocks by Chris Binns

"I have always had considerable respect for Bryston power amplification but the development of the ST and subsequent SST models (a revision that now applies to all the current Bryston range) has, not to put too fine a point on it, served to redefine their performance. Upgraded components together with a revised layout to allow shorter signal paths has led to a major improvement in both technical and musical areas, notably a lower noise floor with increased resolution of detail and dynamics. Both the 14B stereo and 7B mono-block (both of which are bridged designs) have impressed me greatly during my time with them, and while there were subtle differences between the two, they both exhibited the sonic traits that I have come to associate with the bigger Bryston power amplifiers



With the introduction of the **28B SST** earlier this year, there was nothing to suggest that this was anything more than just a (heaven forbid) more powerful 7B with a frightening 1 Kilowatt per unit capability. For the record, that's the specified output on paper, in practice its just over 1.3 kW into eight Ohms with presumably even more available into four... even I started to wonder if this was slightly over the top, But forget about that, because it is totally not what these amplifiers are about.

Aesthetically, the 28B looks much like any other Bryston amplifier, but considerably bigger and of course heavier. And there are the usual options of black or silver, with or without 19" rack and handles which might well be a life saving choice if you ever have to move them around. Internal construction is about as neat as it gets, with virtually no wiring and dominated by a massive, high quality Plitron torroid to supply the +/-90 Volt rails that feed the two power boards with 16 power transistors per side; like the 14 and the 7, the 28 effectively runs two amplifiers in a balanced configuration.

The refinements that set it apart from the earlier models revolve around the input of the amplifier, where the single differential op-amp and inverter used to drive the power sections have been replaced with two differential amps in opposite phase resulting in a symmetrical signal path which together with tighter regulation provides for a cleaner lower distortion source.

The 28B's need a few hours to heat up and deliver their true potential and under normal operating conditions the heat sinks will get warm to the touch, and pretty much stay that way, Initial listening suggested a performance that was considerably ahead of my recollections of both the 7 and the 14B's, the 28B's delivering a that got right under my skin from the get go.

Given that the, high-end Brystons have always excelled in their performance at the bottom end I guess it comes as **no surprise to learn that the 28Bs are the best I have heard** in this area to date. it was easy enough to ascertain the level of grip, authority speed and sheer grunt, that these amplifiers could provide. You average stand mount seemed to gain an extra (finely tuned) bass unit from somewhere, while the 'difficult to integrate' bass aspect of the Martin Logan Vistas had no choice but to obey the freakish control exerted by the 28Bs.

Musically, anything with kick drum and bass guitar had an uncanny agility that meant all sorts of subtle rhythmic combinations seemed to make more sense than ever before, while orchestral music had a sheer presence and weight that allowed for a more palpable and involving performance from many recordings.

But I might be guilty of giving the wrong impression here. While I strongly believe that a system that gets the bass end 'right' stands a far better chance of conveying music in the manner in which it was intended, it was only a small part of what I was hearing with the 28Bs. If I start to talk about cleanliness and etched detail together with expressive dynamics coming from a near absolute silence it is still only half the story, as, it is really the sum of these factors that lend the Bryston its particular brand of magic. The delivery of music is never forced or pushed forward to create an unnatural sense of excitement, but if it is coming at you fast and furious then will know about it.

The drumming and percussion that plays such a big part in the opening of Peter Gabriel's soundtrack *Passion* left my jaw on the ground, and I swear that this track has always been about piling on the volume to create a sense of scale that will leave you open mouthed. With the 28's it is the communication of the energy, and to a degree brutality of the playing that scares you regardless of how loud you listen, and that is one of the scary things about the Bryston; an amplifier of grid sucking power delivery that really does not need to prove itself. Even listening at barely audible levels there is still the impression that everything from

dynamics through to detail and resolution is intact, in other words there is no working level beneath which, and certainly not above – I did threaten the very life of a few bass units that the 28 will work. **The openness, delicacy and sheer subtlety that the Brystons were capable of was sometimes breathtaking, with a fluidity that is often associated with good, make that really good valve amplification, much as I hate that comparison.**

There was a coherence and solidity both spatially and with timing that allowed the music to flow from the loudspeakers without constraint, with almost no regard to listening level, which meant that whatever type of music I chose to play and regardless of recording quality it was always, satisfying.

I would love to have had the 28B's longer in order to try them with a wider range of loudspeakers. Apart from anything else, I am always a bit frustrated when I can not entirely pin down exactly what a piece of equipment is contributing to a system (and I guess that's part of the job description as a reviewer) and I sometimes felt this was the case with the Brystons. But then a small part of me is relieved to know that a product can still hold back some magic that is a bit of a mystery for me, and is there to be enjoyed, That's how I felt about the Brystons; **I can't wait to get them back."**