

PrimaLuna ProLogue Two review

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I must admit it was already in October 2004 that I 'subjected' my ears to the magical tube sounds of the PrimaLuna ProLogue Two. Now that I am finally 'recovered', I finally get around to finishing my story. The complete tube story. The part about 'recovering' is of course just a joke, but it doesn't hurt to put some time between the actual auditioning, judging, absorbing, and typing in of ones impressions. Of course, we are enthusiastic as ever: here at audioforum.be, you read nothing but enthusiastic texts from editors who are wild about certain products. Components and/or speakers that charm in a certain way; that's what we love to write about. Allow me to introduce to you one of the cheapest and most reliable integrated tube amplifiers.

The PrimaLuna ProLogue Two is the second amplifier in a product line that embraces affordable quality. With its 2 X 40 Watts, this guy delivers quite a lot of power for a tube amplifier. About the only essential difference with the ProLogue One is the power tube used: the One uses the EL-34, the Two boasts the KT-88. The design was kept simple, with the most important components in a casing (not including the tubes). The folks at PrimaLuna simply couldn't deny us the charm of the pre- and power tubes, so they fitted them in the front of the 'board'. You should see this at night! All coziness and warmth!



Specs

Power: 2 x 40 watts

Frequency range: 20Hz-30kHz +/- .5db

THD: < 1% at full load

Signal-to-noise Ratio: 89 db

Input sensitivity: 300mV

Power use: 300 watts

Size: 15.5" x 11" x 7.5"

Weight: 37.5 lbs

Inputs: 4 pairs RCA

Outputs: 4 & 8 Ohm connections



Expectations

Personally, I didn't really know what to expect, as I had never heard a tube before! Here and there, one picks up statements like warm sound (those tubes, of course), analogue sound, flowing sound, rest, musicality, and rhythm. Would this PrimaLuna be able to live up to all these expectancies? Well, to be honest, I didn't set any expectancies, because I had never heard tubes before. The sound from my own setup tends to be on the analytical side. At the level of my speakers and behind them, it creates a wide stage with good detail. I absolutely can't complain about the lows either, given the space and speaker type (bookshelf). I've got slam, attack, and pressure. Some instruments tend towards 'thickness' (recording!), but only seldom so. I also like the placement of the different classical instruments. I can listen to that for hours. Whether this sound is 'the' sound, I don't know, but it's 'my' sound, a reference for me.

Meanwhile, I have been avidly extending my frame of reference, by listening to different setups from other audio forum participants. What if this tube amplifier produces an entirely different sound? Will it appeal to me? But then, the sound may be similar to my own. Time to heat up those tubes...

Listening impressions

So what's with the story that a tube needs to heat up first to spread its glow across the sound? It is true, at least in my experience. At first, the amplifier literally sounded a bit 'cool', but once those tubes heated up, the thing came alive! I can reassure you, though: there is no day-and-night difference between this sound and my own. What struck me was that you start listening in a less concentrated way, allowing the music to come at you instead. Thus, your attention focuses on the music only. So a tube sounds nice and musical, let there be no doubt about it. The placement was certainly there, only rounder, vaguer, more fluent. Voices sound full, homogenous, and glowing (e.g., Diana Krall - Love scenes). The PrimaLuna ProLogue Two was definitely capable of driving my speakers to satisfaction. Are there no differences then? There are! My solid state amplification has more power. This became especially clear with the attacks in dynamic parts (e.g., Stravinsky - Firebird). Mind you, these are not painful observations, just marginal differences.

During the review period, I auditioned the amplifier with both CDs and analogue LPs (cf. review Clearaudio Emotion). And boy, what an experience the latter were! All the good characteristics of this amplifier are highlighted even more with LP reproduction. LPs pay more attention to the music than CDs: a more general presentation leads to less fixation on details and a greater sense of music as a whole.



Conclusion

In general, the PrimaLuna Prologue Two rocks. It scores on musicality, involvement, and easy listening! This makes for an exceptional price/quality ratio. With its very palatable price tag of €1.379, it should be in your top 3 of must-audition amplifiers, if you are considering buying in this price range. Highly recommended! Hi-Fi+ feels the same way, they elected the amp 'Product of the ear'.

Short software list

Stravinsky - Firebird suite - Decca (LP)
Dave Brubeck - Greatest hits - CBS (LP)
Chat Baker&Philipe Catherine - Cool Jazz – LDH (LP)
Diana Krall - Love scenes - Impulse (CD)
Nils Lofgren - Acoustic life - Vision (CD)
Tutti orchestral sampler – Diverse - Reference Recordings (HDCD)

Review system

B&W N805 with Signature phase plugs
Atacama Nexus 6 speaker stands, filled with Atabites (on tiles of Belgian blue stone)
Parasound Halo P3
Parasound Halo A23
NAD C541i with Tentlabs XO2 modification
Kimber Select KS-3033 speaker cable
Kimber Select KS-1111 XLR interconnect (P3 - A23)
Kimber Select KS-1011 RCA interconnect (NAD C541i - P3)
Vibrapod Isolators & Cones
Sunleiste multiple socket (6)
Selfmade rack with rubber disconnection

Useful links:

Website PrimaLuna
Dealer Technology Factory
Website Upscale Audio

