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AUDIO REVIEWS

**the absolute sound  
2009  
EDITORS'  
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## WYRED 4 SOUND



**the absolute sound  
2010  
editors'  
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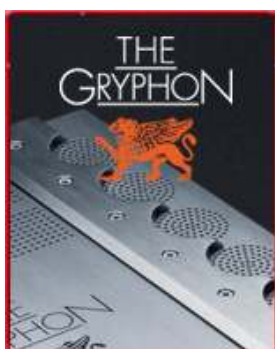


**DAC2 - 24/192 async USB; paralleled dual-differential 32-bit conversion; remote volume, input switching and polarity; comprehensive digital + analog inputs and outputs - \$1,499**

One could likewise conclude that this slight diffusing of presence spikes doesn't fully support listening habits which are used to *impulse response true to the original*. The Jazz number "Tilldessa" made that case. I loved the MasterSound for how fat and shiny it parked the sax into my room but it did lack some teeth. That metallic bite had clearly softened. Ditto the piano section in the middle of the song. From a certain playback volume upward I'm used to the forcefully hammered keys loosening a volley of lances at my ears. Not everyone delights in this but to my mind music occasionally *should* hurt. Here the Evolution 845 differed in opinion. Its tonal balance of the midband is clearly a matter of taste and beyond that should be strongly contingent on speaker pairings. But generally speaking the MasterSound's vocal zone is clearly Italian and not Prussian.



To conclude tonal considerations we need treble. Here one deals with precious shimmer over spectacular sparks. To my ears the uppermost range was lightly shelved down. Still on "Tildess" the airy filigreed cymbal decays remained intelligible and relaxed of course but I've heard more clarity and liberated effulgence elsewhere. Nuances. Not relevant with this number but apparent with others, cymbals over the MasterSound turned somewhat matte on top but also acquired more body, size and—wherever the initial hit was concerned—more realism. The latter references a big metal disc being made to really *oscillate* (rather than merely pretend at it). This benefited rhythm work on ride cymbals in particular. Those grew very insistent but importantly never unduly so given the MasterSound's aforementioned mild presence region depression. The effect was energy without hardness. My notes called it *cymbals for gourmets*.



The *elegant charm* of the Evolution 845 didn't rely solely on this tonal balance but at least for me rested squarely on the physical handling of sounds and their spatial context. Let's start with the virtual stage dimensions. Depth and breadth were quite developed but in this price range other amps manage deeper layering (and others are flatter which puts the MasterSound in the midfield). The first specialty was involvement from moving the music a step closer to the listener rather than playing it laid-back or distanced. This animated take or perspective wasn't faked up with a presence region emphasis as is often the case for more frontal presentations. Here the amp was more defensive and softer yet the music gestured forward toward the audience. Think of it as a soft turn-on – charming and in this iteration rarely heard. Too often immediacy particularly at higher levels or over longer

session is paid for with a harder more nervy undercurrent. Not here. That goal goes to the Italians.



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The second specialty relates to the physical embodiment of sounds to become materially tacit. Particularly in the midband and with voices I fancied this 3D factor and the MasterSound complied fully. While my resident combo does it too it still sounds differently.

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