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AUDIO REVIEWS

 An advertisement for the ASi Grand Mono amplifier. It shows a large, silver, rectangular amplifier unit with a smaller, similar unit to its right. The ASi logo is on the left. Technical specifications are listed on the right.
 

**GRAND MONO**

- 2.400 WATTS INTO 8OHMS
- 3.600 WATTS INTO 4OHMS
- 4.500 WATTS INTO 2OHMS
- 0 TO 500KHZ BANDWIDTH
- 10.000 DAMPING FACTOR
- 240A PEAK CURRENT
- 150V PEAK SWING
- 120DB S/N RATIO

Back to Joanna Newsom with "In California". My usual Octave/Electrocompaniet combo is very good at something hard to describe for which I've come up with the working title *empty room vibe*. It's the illusion that even when there's no sound the presence of another acoustic remains intact. In this quasi empty background space sounds get suspended in precise locations with dimensional plasticity.

The MasterSound begs to differ. I assume that's predominantly because its sonic bodies are bigger and more voluptuous. Miss Newsom doesn't turn outright brothel madam but takes up more stage space. Since this effect translated equally to the harp, woodwinds and remainder of the band without increasing overall stage dimensions, the venue seemed simply *more packed* than usual. One could go verbally fancy and posit that with the MasterSound individual sounds *constitute* their acoustic environ whilst space precedes my house combo in which sounds then *arise*. Aye. That's nothing but wordiness even though, in principle, it points at something substantial. Lest you think my hardcore sonic philosophising exits here, let me tighten the screws by two more turns.



Enter colleague Jochen after 90 seconds worth of auditioning the MasterSound with rowing arm motions: "That breathes nicely!" he opined. Indeed and not only en masse during tutti but already with solo vocals. With song, brass or strings the impact was physical and the performers breathed i.e. shrunk and expanded dynamically depending on intonation, pitch and loudness. That was very attractive and some will fall for the MasterSound just because of it.

More bodily opulence doesn't just seem more curvaceous on humans. Forget laser edges and checker-board sorting also sonically. The MasterSound is an impresario of the organic/harmonic kind and as such a sensual animal. Beyond matters of personal taste I would point at the many studio productions which over analytical holographic equipment sound like lovelessly collaged sound tracks. Those benefit wildly from gracious curves. The MasterSound does this on tonality and staging.



**Conclusion:** In certain ways the MasterSound Evolution 845 reminded me of luxury limousines of days gone by – shark finned profiles, white-rimmed spoked tyres and wheel bases six meters long. Even fuel consumption fits this image. If this ain't no bona fide single-ended valve amp, I plain don't know what is. Sonically too it's more about an idealized world than strictly measured neutrality. The MasterSound goes about things with *Schmackes*, harmonic riches and plenty of satisfaction.

- The big MasterSound integrated isn't complete LF stable. Relative to the chosen architecture (single-ended triodes) things are rather more developed than expected however.
- Overall the lower frequencies are juicy and opulent. A minor upper-bass emphasis is evident and textures aren't

very dry. Even so this range remains differentiated and intelligible.

- The very low bass too is well padded which in conjunction with a more defensive presence region makes for very fulsome mids. The focus is more on harmonic softness than wiry energy. Voices occasionally approach *sinful marvelousity*.
- The treble is energetic, free of hardness and well resolved. Cymbals in particular sound very compelling. The uppermost range is slightly attenuated however.
- Dynamically there are no nits safe for torturing the amp with brutal LF attacks at high SPL.
- The virtual stage has a strong forward projection to the listener and is distinctly not distanced.
- The Evolution 845 renders sounds very materially incarnate and opulently dimensioned. Fascinating is the ability to render the virtual performers as *breathing* entities which depending on level and intonation expand and contract for high dynamic variety.



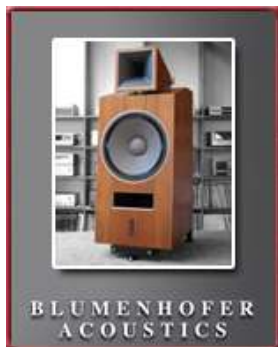
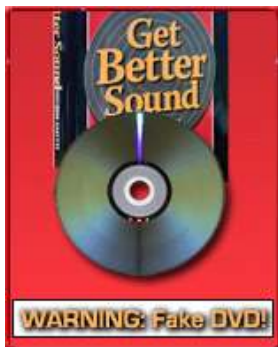
#### Facts

- Dimensions and weight: 55 x 45 x 28cm (WxDxH), 53kg
- Trim: Black chassis with Walnut cheeks, optional high-gloss cheeks for an extra €150
- I/o ports: 3 x high-level, 1 x main-in, speaker terminals with 4/8Ω tabs
- Other: Walnut body remote control for volume comes standard, 4 x Psvane power triodes are optional [€380]
- Power consumption: circa 540 watts, no standby
- Warranty: 2 years

*Ralph Werner*

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MasterSound [website](#)

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