

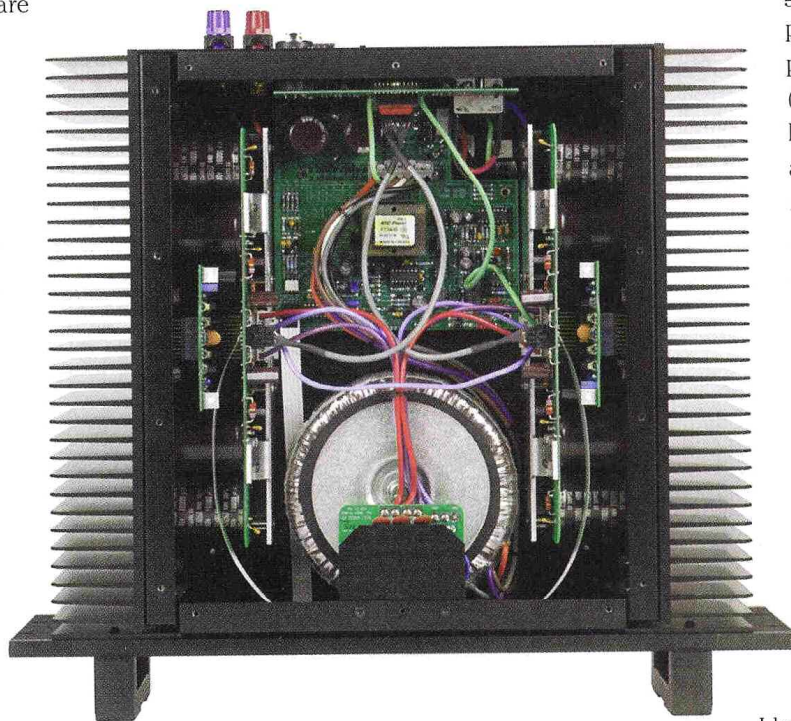
The Bryston 7B SST mono power amplifier

by Chris Binns

Power corrupts...

When it comes to amplification, I do not really have many prejudices. Solid state, valve, class A, OTL, bi-polar... While there are people out there who will only listen to one particular genre (and no doubt vehemently slag-off any other approach... you know the sort) I have a fairly open mind. If I did not have the burden of writing about hi-fi equipment I would undoubtedly classify gear into one of two camps; like or dislike, regardless of the technology. Professional etiquette, however demands a third category; good (or interesting... whatever) but not for me. For example, there are some amplifiers of quite modest output that I love the sound of - how about the Leak Stereo 20 - which do a lot to uphold the idea that it is easier to design a good sounding low powered amp than a big one, but in practice, my requirements are not sympathetic. A few Watts are

not enough. While I can get excited about certain aspects of higher efficiency loudspeakers, I tend to find their shortcomings less than easy to live with, particularly



in the long term, while the desire for an extended bass response preferably without a large cabinet unfortunately means that the third factor in the acoustic equation, namely efficiency, goes out the window. To make matters worse, there are occasional times when I still like to put the cats out, crack open a beer and scare myself with the appropriate music.

So, in the cold light of day the loudspeakers I would choose to listen to require a bit more than a handful of Watts.

Having established that, I rarely get excited by the prospect of mega powerful amplifiers (certainly not since I was a teenager*) and there have been too many disappointments along the way that support the theory that the bigger it is the worse the sound. Strange then, that the Bryston 7B's should prove an exception as it is categorically the most potent amplifier I have used in a domestic system. Not that I am that surprised, as having lived with the 14B ST for a while

I knew to a certain extent what to expect, and there were attributes to that amp's performance that put it in a class of its own, certainly at its asking price.

No, it really is a domestic amplifier.

When Bryston first started making amplifiers, they were not aiming at the professional market. The products might have appeared that way, but don't forget that in America (and Canada, from whence they

*I will probably never forget in the late seventies, working in a recording studio and demonstrating to other bemused engineers that the Naim 250 (seventy Watts per channel) sounded way louder than their beloved professional BGW rated at ten times the output.