

Eternal-Arts DP

TUBE FIRE

„And from the silent chamber only penetrates the last trace of a little light,“ Ludwig Uhland writes in his poem „Die Geisterkeller.“ How nice that EternalArts sparked veritable sonic fireworks instead.

EternalArts
by Dr. Burkhardt Schwabe



Written by Fritz I. Schwertfeger

It is a happy coincidence that in reality, the renaissance of the glowing tubes is making a marked progress. And if engineers of the calibre of Dr. Schwäbe start combining tube circuits - produced at the height of their development - with the latest technology, the result is a perfect symbiosis of the classic and the modern. Hi-fi enthusiasts simply cannot let go of certain things. Not even if this adherence is considered a pure anachronism by many. And certainly not if modern network players promise more comfort and versatility,

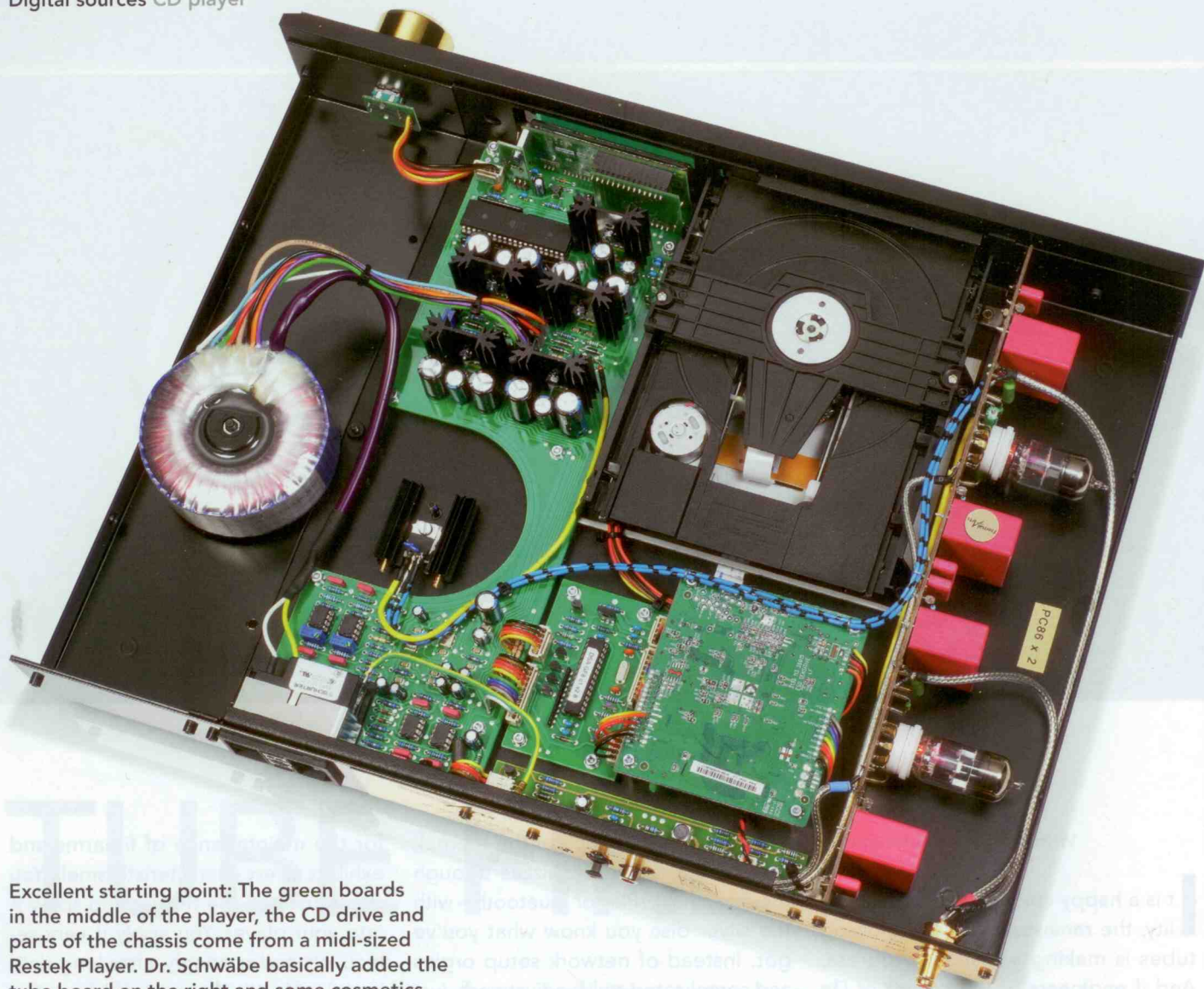
vinyl lures with a touch of the eternal, and musical content whizzes through the ether via AirPlay or Bluetooth - with the silver disc you know what you've got. Instead of network setup orgies and complicated stylus adjustment, just sit back and listen - enjoying music can be so easy. And in case you need proof for this information, a visit to Johannes Maier's office might help. His face will immediately show a comforting smile if you reveal that, last weekend, all the moving parts of the Japanese high-class CD player at your home received a Ballistol treatment - a high quality, very thin oil that was originally formulated

for the maintenance of firearms and exhibits a very characteristic smell. You don't just pull the trigger and spray it into your player. You apply it very selectively and sparingly, after long deliberation, putting just the right amount in just the right places.

It's exactly the attention to detail that often makes the difference. The same holds true with Dr. Burkhardt Schwäbe, EternalArts' development engineer and mastermind. A tireless perfectionist and avowed high-ender with a strong penchant for tubes, Dr. Schwäbe used to establish ambitious HiFi with traditional German manu- >

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Excellent starting point: The green boards in the middle of the player, the CD drive and parts of the chassis come from a midi-sized Restek Player. Dr. Schwäbe basically added the tube board on the right and some cosmetics.

facturers Grundig. Then, Dr. Schwäbe's creations were produced on an industrial scale under the name of FineArts, while today they are mostly made by hand in the corresponding quality. To find a really high-quality CD player in this day and age is hard enough. It becomes even more difficult if you're looking for a proven high-end player: quality craftsmanship, elegant appearance, equipped with an exclusive tube output stage. Fortunately, we are able to refer you to EternalArts' Tube Digital Player DP. At 3,500 euros, its price is not exactly chicken feed, but compared to other EternalArts creations it is pleasantly low. Sound quality, on the other hand, is exactly at the opposite end of the scale. To achieve this objective, Dr. Schwäbe arranged cooperation with renowned manufacturers Restek. This definitely makes sense, since EternalArts is too small to invest millions in

the development of technologies that can be provided in convincing form by Restek. One look inside makes it evident that this player doesn't want to have anything to do with mass-products. And this is exactly where the philosophy of EternalArts comes to light - to distinguish and distance themselves from the majority of their competitors by huge demands in the selection and quality of the components used. As far as the eye can see: nothing but fine materials and appealing design; things you'll rarely find in large-series products. The front panel is made of acrylic glass, the enclosure powder-coated, and the high-gloss black hood made of sheet steel. A fine-meshed grille on the left-hand side provides a view of the tubes. It's nice to be able to watch others at work for a change. On the rear of the player you will find, next to the asymmetrical output, two digital

(coax / optical) output jacks. Everything that can't be produced in-house is supplied by specialised companies. The player is then manually assembled to a perfect product at their own production facility. EternalArts drew on proven, high-quality components such as Philips drives and fully stocked Restek boards. The boards are fitted with low-noise, high-tech Burr Brown 1792 D/A converters (24-bit / 192kHz). Finished in bright red signal colour, even the expensive film capacitors made by Wima know how to please. The large ones are for filtering the supply voltages, while the small ones provide signal coupling. Though magnetically shielded, the toroidal transformer was relocated and kept away from sensitive components in order to increase the signal to noise ratio.

The slightly phalanx of voltage regulators supporting a further stabiliser is

also very impressive. Mounted between the power supply and tubes board, said stabiliser specifically provides the buffered and filtered supplying voltage. Dr. Schwäbe went even further, adding special technical refinements to the player. In addition to the exceptional tube power amplifier, this includes the ingenious concept of one-button operation. All the functions of the player can be controlled by pressure or rotation of the knob mounted at the right-hand side of the housing. The control logic for this operating concept was implemented specifically for EternalArts, and in this form can't be found in any other player. Surely, few players have such a tidy and elegant front panel. The completely flat surface made of highly polished black acrylic glass is a visual treat creating fascinating light refractions. Undisturbed by any buttons, the timeless elegance of acrylic glass is only interrupted by the centrally positioned opening (precisely cut out by water jet) for the display and disc tray. The perfect dimensions of the display and disc tray give proof of the time, effort and tight tolerances in manufacture.

When designing the tube output stage, things were done in a big way. Maier's magnifying instrument, which he probably borrowed from the Karlsruhe Institute for Nuclear Research,

supplied us detailed pictures: Carefully fitted and expensively produced, the double-sided board serves as a throne on which the tubes reside. Its special feature is a copper layer of 70µ thickness, which is additionally gold-plated, thus making a lot of impression merely optical-wise. And loss of signal, even in the least amount, is not to be feared – not even after decades. Two PC86 tubes are mounted on the board, resting on ceramic bases, thus provided with channel-separated accommodation. The PC86 is a low-noise triode that could be found in many a TV set in the past. The special feature of this tube is its control grid design. Here, the wires forming the control grid are tightly stretched in a very short distance above the cathode. This small distance effects a steeper characteristic and lower input capacitance. Furthermore, higher cut-off frequencies, less microphonic effects and said low noise can be achieved. The circuit of the cathode follower tube amp also represents a special feature, putting very little load on the tubes and thus extending their life expectancy virtually to eternity - so that the player can be passed on to future generations of listeners. Due to its popular nature the PC86 is very easy to source should a replacement be needed. At its highest stage of development, the launch of

the transistor era caused the deceptively simple circuit to fall into oblivion, until Dr. Schwäbe dug it up and reintroduced it using state-of-the-art materials.

The Tubes are connected in series to the OP amp output on the Restek board. Thanks to the tubes, the OPs are perfectly decoupled from the uncertainties of connected devices and cables; they reward this by producing a more relaxed sound. This is further refined by the characteristic harmonic distortion behaviour of triodes signalling naturalness to the ears. In addition, the habit of tubes to quasi-slide into the distortion area subjectively increases their dynamic range. In view of the often shrill and flat digital reality, this side effect is perfectly permissible and without any implications, given good overall design. For many music lovers, this is where the magic of tubes really starts.

It was more than remarkable what density and atmosphere the Digital Player DP was capable of extracting from Tom Waits' rather rough voice. For the testers, the rendition of „Cold Water“ from the ,99 „Mule Variations“ album felt like a walk over hot coals. It wasn't just Tom Waits' whiskey-induced voice reminiscent of rusty steel that insistently and threateningly wafted into the listening room. The catchy, raw guitar sound >



Form language: EternalArts will shortly be announcing a stereo amplifier in the same housing. The single button operation is not as intuitive as one might wish, but after going through a bit of a learning curve, we got along pretty well.



Does its job: Standard remote with big EA license plate.

broadly illuminating the room, and an amazingly rich and defined bass foundation left us lusting for more.

Thus, the following piece „Filipino Box Spring Hog“ virtually caused combustion. The Digital Player DP absolutely enchanted us with its special tube fire, causing the volume control of the Ayre preamp to turn further to the right. Charming, yet never annoying, the intensity of the tone continued unabatedly during the „Paint It Black Medley“ by Eric Burdon & War (The Black-Man's Burdon). This carpet of sound was constantly changing in pace and variation, rousing our ears; it was a real delight. Devoid of any artificiality and with great plasticity, the player provided hours of pleasure, so that the passing of time was no longer noticeable. Finally, the audience was deeply moved during „Questa e la cameriera“ out of Puccini's opera „Madame Butterfly“. Light-footed and accurate, the rendition of the dramaturgy was gently delivered by the Digital Player DP. Warm, supple and yet not without temperament - a real charmer. <



Test CD

Tom Waits Mule Variations

Like a rough storm this album whips up all the senses. Waits' scraping voice sparks cascades of goosebump moments. After this stirring album a single malt is pure nervous balm.



Der Autor

Fritz I. Schwertfeger

For this author, the cosy Sony X707ES or XA555ES from Japan exude the same fascination as a '68 Dodge Charger. Although the heyday of these warhorses is over, they can still arouse comforting joy.

EternalArts Digital Player DP

List price: 3,500 euros

Warranty: 3 years

Weight: 8.0 kg

Dimensions (W x H x D): 43 x 7.5 x 32.5cm

Surfaces: Black, nickel-plated,
Black, gold-plated

Distribution:

EternalArts

Wietzendiek 15

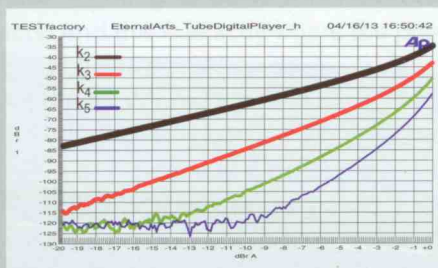
30657 Hannover-Isenhagen

Telephone: +49 511 374 64 22

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Measurements

2nd to 5th harmonics vs. V_{out}

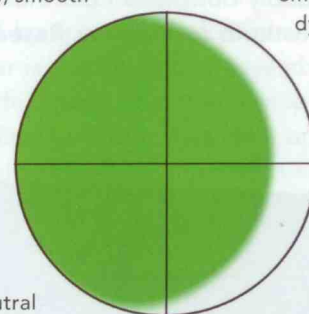


The Eternal Arts' level of distortion is high (0.5%), yet docile, with a perfect dynamic curve (above). Frequency response, signal-to-noise ratio (102dB) and error correction are impeccable, jitter is low (234ps). The DP inverts the phase. Due to its high output impedance (1.2kΩ), short cables should be used.

AUDIophile character

effortless
airy, smooth

gripping
emotional
dynamic



neutral
authentic

direct
high resolution

AUDIophile potential



System recommendation

FineArts Digital Tube Player is one of the special CD players of its kind. Equipped with tubes, of special glow, a feast for the senses for any tube lover.