

BRYSTON

A Lifetime of Music

MEMO: To All Bryston Customers

SUBJECT: Bryston 4B Cubed Review in hi-finews U.K.



POWER AMPLIFIER

Stereo power amplifier. Rated at 300W/16ohm
Made by: Bryston Ltd, Canada
Supplied by: PMC Ltd, Luton
Telephone: 0870 444044
Web: www.bryston.com, www.pmc-speakers.com
Price: £3295

AUDIO FILE

Bryston 4B³

Bryston has replaced its 'Squared' series with a new 'Cubed' amplifier range. Outward changes are subtle, but the company claims big improvements under the skin
Review: Adam Smith Lab: Paul Miller

In our world of electronics and audio, there are more than a few companies that change their product ranges with predictable regularity. When the latest big – or small – thing comes along, manufacturers may be tempted to update all their models accordingly. However, firmware updates aside, there's a lot to be said for an organisation that bides its time, only releasing new products when a significant change is afoot.

THE CUBE RANGE
Canadian company Bryston most definitely falls into such a category as its new product launches rarely arrive to the accompaniment of fanfares and dancing girls, but are almost always significant. Which brings us to the new £5299 4B³ amplifier – the 'Cubed' appellation signifying a new range of amplifiers that supersedes its longstanding 'Squared' series. (This progression might leave Bryston an issue in a few years time as '4B to the power of 4' doesn't quite have the same snappy ring to it.) In this case, the 4B³ replaces the 4BSST [pFN Jun '09] that, in turn, can trace its heritage to the 4BSST [pFN May '07], 4BST [pFN Jun '2000], and 4B N88 versions, then right back to the original 4B model.

The new 4B³ sits towards the middle of a six-strong range that's being rolled out in stages. The 4B³ stereo and the 7B³ mono units are the first, bearing nominal power outputs of 300W and 600W respectively. The range will then be completed by the stereo 2.5B³, 3B³ and 14B³ amplifiers, plus a massive mono 28B³, this full series boasting power outputs from 135W to a speaker-cooking 1kW.

The entire range has been under development for a number of years by a team of engineers led by CEO Christopher Russell. Their main focus was to reduce noise and distortion in the signal path and they had been aided in their endeavour by the late Dr Ioan Alexandru Salomie, a talented engineer and physicist who passed away in 2013. In conjunction with Dr Salomie, Bryston has patented a new amplification and filter circuit that forms the heart of the input section to its revised amplifiers. More on this can be found in PM's boxout (facing page).

In addition to these important changes under the bonnet, Bryston has also freshened up the 4B³'s aesthetics with a precision-milled 12mm thick front panel that, apart from the styling relief, merely contains an on/standby switch and two multi-colour LEDs. These show the status of each channel and indicate power-up muting (red), thermal protection mode (orange) and normal operation (green). They will also flash red in a disapproving manner should you decide to abuse those 300W and drive the amplifier into clipping!

For a unit with such a clean front panel, the rear of the chassis is, by contrast, a positive hive of activity. Naturally, output binding posts and input terminals are provided, the latter in unbalanced and balanced flavours. The former are RCA phono sockets and the latter are an ingenious combo connector that accepts either an XLR or a 6.35mm jack plug. In addition three small toggle switches select between these inputs, between the +23dB and +29dB gain options, and to allow the amplifier to be configured in either bridged or normal stereo mode.

SWITCH-ON SEQUENCES
A power status indicator is also fitted to this back panel. This takes the form of an LED that initially flashes green a number of times determined by the revision level of the soft-start circuit's software. It then changes to glow a steady red, signifying that the amplifier is on and in standby

RIGHT: Not one but two toroidal mains transformers stacked together, feeding separate left/right PSUs. Each power amp channel incorporates four pairs of high current output devices in a quad complementary configuration

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Favourite Quote:

“Ultimately I couldn't find anything that would trip up the Bryston 4B³, no matter what I fed it, the amplifier responded with effortlessness and poise.

It has a refinement and innate musicality that suggests it can turn its hands to anything, albeit in a manner backed by an underlying sense of mischief, and a feeling of power that is little short of addictive.

The measurements (from Paul Miller) are equally impressive overall.”

Adam Smith