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# REFERENCE COMPONENT CAPSULE: MCINTOSH MC2301 AMPLIFIER

POSTED BY HARRY PEARSON ON TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2013



McIntosh is legendary.

And not just for its construction quality, but for the invisibility of its sonic character which makes describing its “sound” extremely difficult.

I have luxuriated in those sonics, in a manner of speaking, because there is so little to describe I can be rest assured that I am hearing the components that precede it in the audio chain. I’m not talking about the company’s ill-fated venture into solid-state of some years ago, but its most recent work in tubed amplification

The 2301, a 300 watt mono amp, is a balanced design with vanishingly low distortion at all frequencies, working equally well into 2, 4, and 8 ohm loads, and with quad differential circuitry (the companies first such venture into this particular circuitry). It uses eight KT88 tubes, terminating into a multifilar output transformer, and with 117dB signal-to-noise ratio. As McIntosh describes it; “providing remarkable low-level linearity and unmatched liquidity.”

I have found the 2301 as close to neutral as any amplifier I have ever tested. It has no overall “coloration,” and no obvious character or sonic signature. I have searched for

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descriptive adjectives but have not, as of now, found useful ones to give readers a sense of its performing art. For the moment, I find it as close to the state-of-the-art of tube design as any amp I have lived with. And it has (just maybe) the best low frequency response of any tube amp I know of. It is something to witness.

How good is it? Does it sound “real”, close to the absolute? I won’t be able to tell until the rest of the components in the audio chain catch up with the 2301’s in neutral transparency.

~HP


### McIntosh 2301 mono amplifiers

MSRP: \$22,000 (pair)


<http://www.mcintoshlabs.com/us>




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